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The Ideological Motivations of General Kurt von Schleicher, the Nazi Movement, and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic, 1930-1933

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Abstract

Most historical narratives of the late Weimar Republic largely omit the role that General Kurt von Schleicher played in the democracy's collapse. He is either viewed as an ineffectual civilian politician, because of his brief two month reign as Chancellor, or examined purely as a military leader for his contributions to military tactics and strategy. This work demonstrates that Schleicher's dual role, as a leading civilian politician and a leading Reichswehr general, in fact made him the most significant politician in the late Republican era. His position as commander of the Reichswehr made him a powerful and highly influential member of the Chancellor cabinets from 1930 to 1933, allowing him to drastically alter the direction of the civilian administration. His ideological motivations, which were defined through his experiences in the army, decisively impacted the course of the Republic. Schleicher's dislike of democratic institutions led him to pursue a course of action that severely weakened the democratic operation of the Weimar state. Additionally, this work presents a new model for interpreting Nazi-State interactions. As Schleicher had become the most powerful statesman in the Republic by 1930, and this influential position was largely due to his command of the Reichswehr, the NSDAP's interactions with the army had a significant impact on the actions of Schleicher and the Weimar State. Instead of adhering to the traditional 'taming' interpretation, which suggests that civilian politicians believed that they could control Hitler if they brought him and the Nazi Party into the Cabinet, this thesis demonstrates that the collapse of the Republic occurred as a result of a power struggle between Hitler and Schleicher for control over a merging NSDAP-Reichswehr conservative military political organization.

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I. Introduction

On November 13, 1918, the Social Democratic Party leader, Friedrich Ebert, and, the then Quarter Master General of the Army, General Wilhelm Groener made a historic pact that effectively established the foundation of the Weimar Republic. It ensured that the German Army, or Reichswehr, would protect the new state from foreign and domestic strife in return for freedom from direct civilian oversight over the army. From this pact, the Republic gradually developed and survived the violent revolutionary era, ending in 1923. Until the late Republic this pact survived numerous challenges, bringing together the conservative Right wing military and the socialist government in an, at times, uneasy association. It is important to emphasize that the Weimar state existed as a result of an alliance between the civilian and military administrations, because its dissolution led to the collapse of the Republic. The uneasy relationship between the state and the Reichswehr, which were dominated by the Reichswehr Minister and later Chancellor General Kurt von Schleicher in the late Weimar period, was one of the most significant factors in the fall of the Republic.

Schleicher became the most influential individual in the late Republican era because of his personal ideological motivations and the unique military-civilian position that he occupied within the Weimar state. Born in 1882, in Brandenburg an der Havel, Schleicher entered the army cadets at the age of fourteen, where he developed and shaped the majority of his core ideological beliefs. Initially serving in the traditional Third Foot Guards in Berlin, he created strong connections with Paul von Hindenburg, and later with other leading conservative military leaders during his time at the *Kriegsakadamie*. With the outbreak of the First World War, Schleicher was appointed to the pinnacle of

traditional Prussian/German militarism, the General Staff. In many ways Schleicher was a part of the traditional imperial era army: nationalized, thoroughly militarized, and deeply tied to the political Right. However, his contact with radical Right throughout the course of the early Republic, served increasingly to politicize Schleicher's ideologies, which broke with the traditional officer corps view on politics. Following the examples of men like Hans von Seeckt and Wilhelm Groener, Schleicher became deeply involved in the sphere of party politics, as did the entire Reichswehr. During the late Republican era, Schleicher gained vast amounts of power in the civilian administration, initially due to his strong position within the army. Assuming the political functions of the office of Reichswehr Minister during Groener's tenure in the post, Schleicher began acquiring political power by 1928. By the time Schleicher was appointed Reichswehr Minister in 1930, he had already developed connections through the state bureaucracy. Exploiting his close association with President Hindenburg, Schleicher first secured a position within the cabinet, and later dominated its direction and the course of the Republic over its final two and a half years. Therefore Schleicher's position within the Republic typified the nature of the Weimar state. Just as the Republic was an uneasy alliance between the military and civilian spheres, Schleicher's power within the state also had this dual nature. He was at once a leading General, molded by years of service in the Imperial army and its associated beliefs, and a dominant figure in the civilian administration during the later years of the Republic.

It is important to examine Schleicher's personal ideological motivations in light of his powerful and influential position in the late Republic. As Reichswehr Minister, and later as Chancellor, Schleicher held extensive control over the direction of the Weimar

state between March 1930 and January 1933. Most importantly his anti-democratic sentiments were highly destructive for the Republic. Schleicher was associated, either directly or indirectly, with the majority of significant actions taken against the social democracy. Until Hitler's assumption of power, Schleicher's creation and development of the Presidential Cabinet was the most effective blow against the Weimar state. Beginning in 1930, Schleicher increasingly consolidated the powers of the Reichstag and provincial governments in the Presidential Cabinet. This greatly restricted the access of democratically elected officials to powerful positions within the state, and privileged the conservative, anti-democratic forces within Germany. Additionally, Schleicher's aggressive acquisition of executive powers was fundamentally linked to the July 1932 attack against the Prussian Provincial Government. This coup was an open and direct assault on a democratic institution. Significantly, it also represented Schleicher's violation of the Reichswehr's pledge to defend the Republic from physical attack. Throughout the chaotic events of the early Republic, from the creation of the state to the end of the Kapp Putsch in 1920, the alliance between the army and the civilian administration had held. After 1930, however, Schleicher acted on his deeply rooted, anti-democratic sentiments to break the pact and openly support an attack on the Republic.

Schleicher had expressly expansionist and revisionist goals that had detrimental effects on the vitality of the Weimar state. Again stemming from his formative experiences in the army, Schleicher designed his *Expansions-* and *Revisionspolitik* around objectives that would benefit the military, not the Republic. Instead of pursuing revisions intended to reduce reparations and relieve economic pressure on Germany,

Schleicher advanced a program of military concessions aimed at increasing the military potential of the Reichswehr. Throughout the Five Power Talks at Geneva during 1932, the German delegation embraced his expansionist agenda. The vast extent of German foreign policy under Schleicher's influence was directed at achieving re-armament, for solely expansionist purposes. The overwhelming majority of Schleicher's revisions of the Treaty of Versailles were designed to create a German army capable of waging a war for European dominance. Furthermore, his economic policies were aimed a producing a 'war economy' that would be best-suited to support a modern war effort, not reducing the financial pressure on German citizens. Although he initiated a program of economic subsidies in an attempt to bolster the German industrial sector, his actions were in fact guided by these same expansionist principles. Rather than attempting a systematic revival of the economy, Schleicher gave subsidies directly to certain industries deemed militarily significant. Therefore his *Expansions-* and *Revisionspolitik* had substantially weakened the Weimar Republic. During a pivotal point in the state's history, instead of enacting an economic policy that would have ensured fiscal regeneration or a foreign policy that would have achieved significant concessions benefiting the lives of all German citizens, Schleicher pursued aggressively expansionist and revisionist goals for the direct benefit of the military.

Schleicher's social policies also served to undermine the strength of the Republic. Due to several of the Reichswehr's assumptions concerning the future nature of warfare, Schleicher actively pursued the militarization of society. Designed to increase the coordination between the military and civilian spheres, Schleicher began implementing a

series of programs aimed at increasing the 'military friendliness'[1] of the German populace. Under the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles, the German army was limited to 100,000 troops, thus significantly reducing the exposure of the Reichswehr and militarism to the general populace. Military leaders perceived this as a crisis for Germany and they maintained that German society had somehow become de-militarized by the creation of the Republic. This situation could only be corrected, they maintained, through aggressive plans for the militarization of society. Schleicher was greatly influenced by this theory, and it was one of the principal motives behind his prominent and persistent policy of the pursuit of the militarization of German society. Through the use of para-military organizations, like the Stahlhelm and the Nazis' SA (*Sturmabteilung*), Schleicher hoped to increase the acceptance of military values, such as sacrifice, obedience and discipline, in a much larger segment of German society than would have otherwise been possible through service in the Reichswehr alone. This policy had a subversive effect on the Republic as a whole. Instead of one of its leading politicians promoting democratic values, Schleicher was promoting an avowedly expansionist and war like ideology through state means. At a time when the social democracy's popularity was far from universal, Schleicher's militaristic policies failed to strengthen the Republic and undermined the wider legitimacy of the Weimar state.

Sharing very similar ideological positions, Schleicher and leaders of the NSDAP established significant connections with each other during the final years of the Republic. Schleicher and Nazi leaders were extremely militaristic, nationalistic and anti-democratic. Additionally, Schleicher's primary support network, the Reichswehr, was

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[1] Anton Golecki, Das Kabinett von Schleicher: 3 Dezember 1932 bis 30 Januar 1933. (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt, 1986), 92.

increasingly merging with the NSDAP from 1930 on. While many of the lower ranks were drawn from segments of society that already sympathized with the Nazis, the troops were also being brought into increased contact with the party through the *Grenzschutz* (Border Defense Units). Also, many of the more senior officials were attracted to the Nazis' consistent commitment to the pursuit of re-armament. This was be the most important connection between the two groups, and was also a pre-requisite for Schleicher accepting the NSDAP. Schleicher was highly cognizant of the merging together of the Nazi Party and the Reichswehr and this naturally influenced his interactions with them. He pursued an integration, not taming, of the NSDAP into a new Presidential Cabinet regime. Through discussions with the prominent Nazi Gregor Straßer, Schleicher hoped to assert his control over the merging NSDAP/Reichswehr structure, and then align it firmly under the new Presidential system. However, Nazi leader Adolf Hitler brought about the eventual collapse of the association between Straßer and Schleicher which resulted in the fall of the Weimar Republic. Despite his dislike of the Republic, by 1932 Schleicher had become its strongest politician. Thus his downfall also signalled the end of the Weimar state.

This interpretation of the final years of the Republic is largely a departure from the majority of historical analysis. The earliest historians examining the period typically omit Schleicher's role from their narratives. Karl Dietrich Bracher's study of the dissolution of the Weimar Republic, from 1955, establishes the traditional view that Schleicher's role was minimal, owing to his brief two month reign as Chancellor from November 1932 to January 1933. Instead, Bracher, and this school of thought, explained the collapse of the Weimar Republic in terms of the actions of the various political parties

in Reichstag, particularly the NSDAP and their violent initiatives. Many authors following this type of interpretation centre their analysis on Hitler and the Nazi Party's attacks on the Weimar Republic, treating Republican statesmen as secondary players in the final years. Much of this research, like the work done by Eberhard Kolb and Johannes Hürter, focuses heavily on Chancellors Heinrich Brüning and Franz von Papen, whose reigns spanned from 1930 to December 1932. However, this ignores the unique political, social and constitutional situation that existed in the late Republic. The army occupied an extremely powerful position within German culture and politics in the Weimar state, thus giving Schleicher an influential position as Reichswehr Minister. Furthermore, due to his close personal friendship with both Paul and Oskar von Hindenburg, Schleicher had direct access to the extensive executive functions of the Presidency. As a Field Marshall and Reich President of the Weimar Republic, the elderly Paul von Hindenburg held a significant amount of power in both the civilian and military administrations. His younger and more active son Oskar became powerful during the late Republic due to his position as a Presidential advisor and his extensive access to and influence with the President. Thus Schleicher's strong relationship with the House of Hindenburg provided him with a convenient avenue to the powers of the office of Reich President. Finally, these interpretations of Schleicher's role in the Republic ignore the importance of lower-level government officials in the setting of policy. Schleicher came to acquire an almost veto power within the Presidential Cabinet from 1930 on, by aggressively promoting his loyal subordinates into influential posts within the government. Therefore, Schleicher's position cannot be removed from the analysis of the late Republic, which occurred in the classical interpretations of the collapse of the Weimar state. Schleicher had too much

power and influence over the direction of the Republic to be carelessly omitted from examinations of its demise.

While Axel Schild does focus on the actions and importance of Schleicher in the late Republican era, his analysis fails to present a well-defined alternative to the 'taming' theory. Although Schild does examine the relationship between Schleicher and Gregor Straßer; however, he fails to fully explore the implications of this alliance, and how it fundamentally alters the commonly accepted interpretation of the collapse of the Republic. Schild thoroughly analyzes Schleicher's various ideological motivations throughout the Republic, but he does not adequately explain the impact that they had on the collapse of the Weimar state. Indeed, Schild also fails to incorporate the importance the Schleicher-Straßer alliance and the ideological and institutional connections between the Reichswehr and NSDAP into his section on Nazi-Schleicher interactions. While he does challenge the validity of the 'taming' theory, Schild does not propose an alternative framework for examining the actions of Hitler and Schleicher. Thus, while Schild examines Schleicher in far greater depth than any contemporary historian, he does not connect his analysis of Schleicher to wider issues present in the literature surrounding the collapse of the Weimar Republic.

The majority of the historians that do include Schleicher in their examinations of the collapse of the Republic largely focus on the 'taming' theory. These works examine Schleicher within the larger context of relations between the military and civilian administrations. This 'taming' interpretation holds that Schleicher recognized the power of the NSDAP and sought to 'tame' or adopt the organization for his own benefit. Authors like Carsten, Gordon, Feuchtwanger, Kolb and Geyer have all primarily

supported this theory, and discussed the numerous cabinet positions offered to Hitler and the NSDAP by Schleicher. However this interpretation of Schleicher's motives and future plans obscures several key issues. Proponents of the 'taming' theory fail adequately to examine the important interactions between the NSDAP and the Reichswehr as institutions. Through the SA's participation in the *Grenzschutz*, as well as significant contacts between local NSDAP officials and middle level army officers, the Reichswehr and the Nazi Party were beginning to merge into one right-wing power structure. This inter-mixing of the two organizations necessitates a re-examination of the actions of both Schleicher and Hitler. Instead of treating Schleicher's attempts to 'tame' the Nazi Party and Hitler's attacks on the Republic as a whole, this thesis will examine the relations between Schleicher and Hitler as a power struggle for control over the newly emerging Reichswehr/NSDAP organization. It will argue that Schleicher's association with the moderate Nazi Gregor Straßer aimed to constitute a new coalition between the Reichswehr and the NSDAP that maintained the army's dominant influences rather than the ultimately successful NSDAP dominant/Reichswehr subordinate organization that Hitler achieved through his alliance with Papen and the commander of the powerful *Wehrkreis I* (East Prussia), General von Blomberg. This alternative leadership group that Schleicher was building with Straßer further demonstrates the short-comings of the 'taming' theory. These men were so ideologically similar that this was a partnership, albeit not an equal one, or a meeting of similar minded individuals. The Nazi Party and the Reichswehr had similar ideological motivations, drew support from related segments of society, and had compatible goals for the future of Germany. Thus for Schleicher the NSDAP was not an independent or foreign organization that needed to be 'tamed,' but

rather a potentially valuable ally that he sought closer links to, through an acceptable intermediary like Straßer. Additionally, the Schleicher-Straßer and Hitler-Papen-Blomberg leadership groups only represented the final consolidating phase of the intermingling of the army and the NSDAP, which had begun with the lower ranks several years before the events of 1932 to January 1933, and not a new political development.

Schleicher's personal ideological motivations had important effects on both the collapse of the Republic and the nature of the state's interactions with the NSDAP. Through his powerful position within the Weimar state, Schleicher was able largely to influence the direction of the government for its final two and a half years. Re-analyzing the over-arching principles that guided the majority of Schleicher's most important actions will shed new light on the course and fall of the Weimar Republic.

II. The Problem of Democracy

Despite the successes of the liberal movements throughout Europe during the 19th and early 20th centuries in countries like England, France and Italy, Germany in many respects, remained highly anti-democratic and resistant to the development of a liberal parliamentary system. The officers of the Imperial Army were extremely loyal to the Kaiser and his rule, due to the long standing traditional connection between the monarchy and the army. This close association dated back to the time of Frederick the Great. Therefore it was natural that the enemies of the monarchy became enemies of the army. This adopted aversion to democracy carried over well into the Weimar Republic. The leaders of the army, once sworn defenders of the *Kaiserreich*, were now confronted with an unwelcome social democracy, born out of military defeat and humiliation. Thus it could hardly be unexpected that the leaders of the Reichswehr would attempt to destroy the Republic and return to a more acceptable form of government, in their eyes. Schleicher was one of the leading political and military figures in the late Republic era, from 1928 to 1933. As commander of the Reichswehr, Chancellor, and later Reichskommissar of Prussia, he had a vast, and extra-constitutional, amount of power in the Republic. His own personal goals and desires were, therefore, extremely influential over the direction that the Weimar state would take in its final years. Schleicher's anti-democratic sentiments must be clearly demonstrated in order to understand his destructive impact on the Republic. Indeed, his actions were a leading cause of the weakening of the Weimar state's institutions and proper operation. Schleicher's personal ideological motivations as well as his actions during the final years of the Republic will be discussed in order to understand his role as an enemy of the Weimar democracy.

Schleicher's direct actions against the Republic would not have been possible without certain key political developments during Heinrich Brüning's stint as chancellor from March 1930 to May 1932. Under Brüning the first Presidential Cabinet was established in response to the financial crisis in Germany, brought on by the New York Stock Market collapse in 1929. Without the continual influx of American capital, the Germany economy collapsed under the weight of reparation payments to both France and England. Due to the increased strains and tensions from this crisis, Brüning sought the support of the Reichspresident Paul von Hindenburg to enact his government's policies. In many respects Brüning was a product of the imperial age, given to authoritarian decrees and resistant to working with numerous political parties to reach a collective decision.[2] Additionally, it was under his chancellorship that critics began to refer to the President as the "Ersatz Kaiser." Increasingly, Hindenburg acted like the Kaiser of the Imperial era, using his vast constitutional powers to give chancellors that he approved of, like Brüning, Papen and Schleicher, dictatorial powers over the rest of the Reichstag.[3] The Chancellorship of Franz von Papen was largely an extension of Schleicher's agenda. Coming to power in June 1932, Papen never established effective control over his own cabinet. Indeed Schleicher stated that Papen was not a head, but rather a hat, implying that he, Schleicher, would lead the Republic during Papen's reign.[4] It is important to remember that Schleicher was not the first Chancellor to take actions against the democratic operation of the state; instead he merely used the precedent that was

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[2] Dirk Blasius, Weimars Ende: Bürgerkrieg und Politik, 1930-1933, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 1. However, Brüning did periodically work with the Catholic Centre Party in some of his policy decisions.
[3] *Ibid.*, I.
[4] F.L. Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics: 1918 to 1933, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 365.

established under Brüning to further his anti-democratic goals.[5] Additionally, Article 48, which granted substantial emergency executive powers to the President, and was used to enact many of Schleicher's policies, had been used numerous times much earlier in the Republic's history. Despite this anti-democratic precedent, Brüning remained largely tied to the Weimar state, leading the Centre Party, and still conducting the majority of his actions within the constitutional framework.[6] Indeed, Brüning's position as a powerful, conservative, authoritarian, yet not necessarily anti-Republican politician could have made him a rallying point for conservative forces, instead of the NSDAP and Hitler.

Despite Brüning's general loyalty to the Republic, his role in the creation of the Presidential Cabinet system greatly assisted Schleicher's anti-democratic aims. What began as a method of enacting Brüning's conservative fiscal policies, in response to the financial crisis, was used as the centre piece for the more anti-Republican plans of Papen and then Schleicher. The Presidential Cabinet system relied upon the authority of President von Hindenburg to issue presidential decrees and to activate Article 48 of the Weimar constitution, which allowed for the enactment of emergency declarations, without the support of the Reichstag. Schleicher had a strong connection to both President Hindenburg and his son, having served in the same unit in the army, the Third Foot Guards, before the outbreak of the First World War. This gave Schleicher direct access to the powers of the presidency. This entire system of operation was inherently anti-democratic as the Reichstag could only over turn these Presidential decrees with a two-thirds majority, which would have been extremely difficult to have obtained given

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[5] Article 48 had been invoked numerous times, early in the Republican era, during the chaotic revolutionary period from 1919-23.
[6] Blasius, Weimars Ende, I.

the highly divided political climate in the Republic. However, Schleicher exploited the fear about the possibility of the NSDAP achieving a two-thirds majority in the next election, as justification to use Article 48 even more extensively, in an attempt to limit the advances of the Nazi Party.[7] Thus a General with no parliamentarian review or oversight was allowed to gain a vast amount of political power over democratically elected officials, who possessed limited options for curtailing this authority. Therefore, Schleicher's position of power in the Presidential cabinet weakened the democratic operation of the state, because it took power from publicly elected officials. The first step toward setting up the Presidential Cabinet system was securing the approval of the President for the cabinet's actions, which began under the Brüning regime. Schleicher's strong connection to Hindenburg guaranteed the extensive powers would be granted to the Chancellor's cabinet if needed. The second step involved consolidating most of the public authority in the hands of the men in the cabinet. In this endeavor Schleicher was largely successful.

Thus the cabinets of Papen and Schleicher acquired extensive powers to influence, and at times dictate, the government's direction. The Presidential Cabinet system was able to function because of the amount of authority that was consolidated under the Cabinet ministers, or with a subordinate of Schleicher. Under Brüning and Papen, Schleicher was able to remove parliamentary oversight over the actions of the Reichswehr Ministry, as well as the Finance Ministry.[8] Furthermore, Schleicher

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[7] Conversation between Frick and Schleicher on the 12th of December, 1932. Golecki Das Kabinett von Schleicher, 23. (Hereafter known cited as DKS)

[8] Axel Schild, Militärdiktatur mit Massenbasis? Die Querfrontkonzeption der Reichswehrführung um General von Schleicher am Ende der Weimarer Republik, (Frankfurt: Campus, 1981), 57.

successfully moved the responsibilities of the Minister of the Interior to offices that were not under the purview of the Reichstag.[9] Additionally, Schleicher was able to promote many of his closest associates, like Joachim von Stülpnagel and Dr. Gereke,[10] so that he had either direct or indirect control over most the leading positions within the civilian administration and the Reichswehr.[11] His control over the functions of the Weimar state were so complete that during his short reign as Chancellor he was even able to influence the Reich Justice Minister infavour of lifting the ban on the SA.[12] This demonstrates that Schleicher was able to consolidate a vast amount of power within the control of the Presidential Cabinets. Personally, he also acquired an extensive range of positions, becoming Chancellor, while also being the commanding General of the Reichswehr, Reichskommissar for Prussia, and the Commander of the Schutzpolizei. Schleicher was able to gain a great deal of political power through his control over the *Ministeramt*. Also, due to General Wilhelm Groener's dislike of politics, Schleicher was given access to most of the political functions of the Reichswehr as early as 1928, well before his rise to the post of Reichswehr Minister. Additionally Schleicher was able to either directly control or have one of his subordinates, like Joachim von Stülpnagel or General von dem Bussche, in command of most of the leading offices of the Reichswehr, including the *Wehrmachtsabteilung* and the *Ministeramt*.[13] These were important positions to control

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[9] Schild, 58.
[10] Stülpnagel was appointed chairman of Youth Education Programme, while Dr. Gereke assumed the command of the *Reichs Arbeitsbeschaffungs* Ministry. DKS, 89.
[11] Gordon Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army 1640-1945, (London: Oxford University Press, 1955),
[12] DKS, 89.
[13] Manfred Messerschmidt, "The New Face of Militarism in the Nazi Era," in Wilhelm Deist Ursachen und Voraussetzungen des Zweiten Weltkrieges, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1989), 267.

because they gave Schleicher administrative powers within the Reichswehr through the *Wehrmachtsabteilung*, as well as management of the political functions of the army with the *Ministeramt*. Indeed, Schleicher's appointment to the *Ministeramt* under Groener's era as leader of the Reichswehr gave him access to most of the political powers of the army, and direct access to the Reichstag.[14]

This consolidation of Schleicher's power and control over various organs of the state, including the Finance, Justice, Foreign, and Police Ministries, was inherently anti-democratic. Though it was not overtly or directly an attack on the state, it did serve to limit the influence of the democratically elected officials and put the powers of the Republic in the hands of conservative individuals, who thought along the same lines as Schleicher. This process of adding powers to the Presidential cabinet was aimed at cementing the dominance of the non-elected cabinet over the Reichstag. However, simply being anti-democratic and conservative was not necessarily enough to retain Schleicher's support. This was demonstrated when Schleicher removed Brüning in June 1932, because Brüning did not see cooperation with the NSDAP as a viable option for the Republic.[15] Thus, Schleicher's consolidation of the Presidential Cabinet system, by fortifying the powers of the cabinet members, was in fact a blow against the operation of democratic Republic because it restricted the access of representatives of the people to the powers of the state.

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[14] Jürgen Schmädeke, Militärische Kommandogewalt und parlamentarische Demokratie: Zum Problem der Verantwortlichkeit des Reichwehrministers in der Weimarer Republik, (Lübeck: Matthiesen Verlag, 1966), 88.

[15] Richard Bessel, Political Violence and the Rise of Nazism: The Storm Troopers in Eastern Germany 1925-1934, (London: Yale University Press, 1984), 74.

Schleicher's anti-democratic policies were made more apparent through his interactions with the various political parties in the Reichstag. Indeed, he constantly discussed his desires for *Überparteilichkeit*, or desire to be above the parties or non-partisan. However, Schleicher took this idea well beyond the notion of being above political squabbling, and sought to eliminate all party influence over the government. This policy was certainly directed more against the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and the KPD (Communist Party of Germany), than to the Centre Party, under Brüning, or the DNVP (German Nationalist People's Party), but it also applied to the more radical NSDAP. This aversion to working with political parties can be traced back to Schleicher's first contact with the highly divided Reichstag in 1928, when he took over most of the political duties of the Reichswehr, under Groener, as chief of the *Ministeramt*.[16] Schleicher gave voice to this *Überparteilichkeit* in 1930 when a new Chancellor was being chosen, and he insisted that the successful candidate must be prepared to "form a government of personalities, prepared to carry out the work of economic and financial restoration without consulting the parties and without any coalition ties."[17] This clearly demonstrated Schleicher's refusal to work with the parties, as well as his desire to restrict their influence on the Chancellor and his cabinet. Complete *Überparteilichkeit* was increasingly sought from 1930 to 1933. Beginning with Brüning, there was a noticeable trend against working with multiple parties to achieve collective agreements.[18] What began as a preference to work only with right wing political parties turned into a fixed policy of working with parties that fitted in with

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[16] Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics, 307.
[17] *Ibid.*, 307. Notes of Captain Noeldechen (Jan 1930 – 10 March 1930).
[18] Blasius, 22.

Schleicher's particular goals, and finally ended with Schleicher becoming Chancellor with no popularity or support in the Reichstag at all. Thus, what was initially a desire to work above partisan politics, became, in the hands of Schleicher, a sharply anti-democratic policy that excluded more and more points of view from representatives of the citizenry. Therefore Schleicher's method of working "above parties" was more akin to working without parties at all. Additionally, some historians have made connections between the so-called "Bürgerkrieg" between the Communists and the National Socialists and Schleicher's aversion to political parties.[19] The highly destructive, violent and politically damaging "civil war" between the right and left parties did little to endear either party to the Reichswehr leadership, Schleicher included. While it is true that the army saw the SA and the NSDAP as organizations that they could potentially deal with, it did not mean that they would wholeheartedly enter into political agreements with them.[20] Indeed, it is very plausible that the polarizing events of the Bürgerkrieg served to turn Schleicher away from not only the right and left wings but also all political parties in general. Nevertheless, Schleicher's personal form of *Überparteikeit* was inherently anti-democratic, because it sought to completely remove influence or interactions by the political parties from the government.

Another manifestation of Schleicher's anti-democratic sentiments were shown through his somewhat contradictory *Obstruktionpolitik* ("obstruction policy"), whereby he interfered with the internal and external operations of various parties to achieve his own political gains. Despite his expressed desire to keep the parties of the Reichstag out of government and to have as little contact as possible with them, Schleicher actively

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[19] Blasius and Carsten both make this association.
[20] Bessel, Political Violence, 57.

hampered the operations of parties, regardless of political orientation. During the November 1932 election Schleicher used his political powers to influence decision makers within the DNVP in order to promote candidates who were more anti-Republican, and therefore more acceptable for him[21]. Most notably Schleicher backed the anti-Republican candidate Düsterberg to head the DNVP,[22] after orchestrating Brüning's ouster from the office of Chancellor. Additionally, he helped von Schulenberg to rise to greater prominence within the DNVP, a noted opponent of the Weimar state and a potential ally for Schleicher.[23] His most notable act of *Obstruktionpolitik* was the attempt to divide the NSDAP leadership and use their public support for his new regime. This centred on bringing the leading Nazi Party member Gregor Strasser into the cabinet during late 1932, in an attempt to foment a leadership struggle within the NSDAP.[24] After Straßer's disappearance, Schleicher shifted his efforts to undermine Hitler's position in the Nazi Party, through a concerted effort to delay the upcoming elections as long as possible.[25] It was believed that if the Nazis did not come to power soon that many supporters would become disillusioned with the movement and transfer their support to another conservative party,[26] like the more acceptable DNVP. This was largely based on the marginal decrease in the popularity of the NSDAP after the November 1932 election, which saw the Nazis lose several million votes.[27] However, Schleicher was forced to

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[21] Schild, 53.
[22] *Ibid.*, 53.
[23] *Ibid.*, 54.
[24] Carsten and Golecki's monographs include discussions of this plan.
[25] Craig, 454.
[26] Schild, 53.
[27] DKS, 24.

admit that this plan was a failure by late January 1933.[28] This demonstrates active attempts to disrupt the constitutional operation of the social democracy. Schleicher was trying to interfere with the election process to mold the Reichstag into a more acceptable form, which would better allow him to accomplish his goals. However, these efforts only served to weaken the Republic and its primary democratic institution, the Reichstag. Additionally, Schleicher's *Obstruktionpolitik* shows his willingness to disrupt the Republic. This policy was completely contradictory to his publicly stated desire for the government act "above parties," but this did not hinder his actions at all. Thus even when Schleicher did interact with the Republic, it was in an anti-democratic manner, designed to achieve his own objectives, often at the expense of the social democracy and the principles that it was founded upon.

Additionally, at a meeting on the 30th of August 1932, Papen, with the implicit support of Schleicher, attempted to gather support in his cabinet for the creation of a Presidential Party. They hoped to gather together supporters from the moderate sections of the NSDAP, the political Right in general, as well as from the Centre Party and even from the Social Democratic Party. This was the basis of the *Querfront*, or cross front, concept that made an attempt at using nationalism to bridge political divisions.[29] This was to coincide with the abolishment of direct elections to the Reichstag and Landtagen (or Provincial Legislatures). Instead, representatives of the people would be elected to select delegates to sit in the Reichstag. Schleicher and proponents of the plan believed that this would allow them to gain greater influence over the composition of the Reichstag. However, they also feared that they could not acquire enough support at the

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[28] Schild, 165.
[29] Schild expresses this view throughout his narrative.

highest levels, either within the cabinet, or from the House of Hindenburg, for the plan to proceed. Schleicher was receptive to the idea, but stated that he felt that it was too similar to a monarchy for it to gain widespread support. Additionally, he stated that the problem lay with defending "the throne" not creating it.[30] Schleicher viewed the creation of a "throne" as unrealistic, because he felt that the army would be unable to defend attacks from both the Communists and the National Socialists, both of whom he believed would make attempts to take over the newly created power structure.[31] While the Presidential Party was never created, it clearly shows that even by the autumn of 1932, Schleicher was entertaining increasingly radical ideas about changing the democratic structure of the Weimar Republic.

Schleicher also developed a general critique of the overall nature of the Republic. Centering on what he termed the class consciousness of the Weimar state, Schleicher believed that there was too much of a focus on the working class and that this caused increasing divisions within German society. Additionally, Schleicher critiqued Marxist socialism's suitability for Germany, by stating that Marx focuses solely on the working class, but failed to realize that every German is a worker.[32] Indeed, many of the conservative members of the Reichswehr also blamed the Weimar Republic for the social turmoil of the interwar period. It was believed that a "socialist government" was a foreign creation and went against the desires of the majority of Germans.[33] Thus critics of the

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[30] Schild, 102.
[31] *Ibid.*, 103.
[32] *Ibid.*, 106.
[33] While the Weimar state was far from a true socialist regime, critics of it would often label it as such because of the involvement of the SPD and Communists in the Republic's creation, as well as some of the more socialist influenced policies of the early state, like strong labour unions and increased state involvement in the economy.

Republic viewed the so-called 'Bürgerkrieg' or civil war as a systemic fault in the structure of Weimar democracy, that the conservative right would always be seeking to subvert the dominant position of the socialists.[34] Much of this critique can be attributed to fears of the conservatives concerning the rise of the working class movement in response to the onset of the financial crisis.[35] Additionally, this was particularly troubling to Schleicher, as this rise in support for the left and militant left wing organizations could have potentially challenged the monopoly of violence controlled by the army. This only served to heighten the anxieties of the army, which already felt threatened by the strength of the SA.

In response to the presence of Marxist socialism in Germany, the anti-democratic forces created a new form, "state socialism." Connecting ideas of the struggle of races with nationalism and the creation of a sense of community through a shared common experience, this new "state socialism" was to be a way for the conservative anti-democratic bloc to connect traditional nationalism with socialism. State socialism was integrally associated with the idea of a *Kameradschaft*, or a group of people who were united by a shared common experience; in this case it would be defeat in the First World War. Also, the "Front Experience" was a major component to the *Kameradschaft*, as the horrors of the battlefield were supposed to unite various sections of society that had been involved in the Great War. The trials and suffering that the German people faced after 1918 were supposed to create a feeling of brotherhood and unity. The leaders of the Reichswehr believed that this *Kameradschaft* was an ideal way to make the army a social

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[34] Michael Geyer, "Professionals and Junkers: Rearmament and Politics in the Weimar Republic" in EJ Feuchtwanger, Social Change and Political Development in Weimar Germany, (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 87.

[35] Schild and Schmädeke both discuss this theory throughout their respective analyses.

factor in the Republic, because of the strong associations between the armed forces and the war. Schleicher felt that once the Reichswehr had assumed this new social position, the army could become a bridge between the state and the economy. Schleicher stated that the army's goal was to reach a balance between "*Kapital und Masse*."[36] Additionally, Schleicher stated in a speech that "the Reichswehr would be a protector, regardless of classes or interests."[37] This statement was a direct attack on the so-called class consciousness and division that characterized politics in the Republic. It was hoped that this new ideology of state socialism would be able to gather the support of the middle class, and possibly large industrialists as well, while weakening the influence of the working class movement simultaneously.[38] This plan for army influence in social matters, directly hoping to subvert the position of the Republic in society, is a clear sign of Schleicher's anti-democratic intentions. State socialism was, in many ways, a way of attacking the main supporters of the Republic. It was aimed at replacing the democratic ethos of the Republic with a militaristic "social" cult.

Clearly Schleicher had little loyalty to the Republic. These numerous plans to either weaken or destroy social democracy demonstrate the general's desire for change within Germany. During the Brüning era, Schleicher began to view the current Weimar state as a *Übergangsregierung*, or a transition government. He had plans to use the existing form of government under Brüning, with heavy Presidential influence, to bring about a transition from republican democracy to a form of popular military dictatorship.[39] In the summer of 1930, both Groener and Schleicher expressed a desire to see the army

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[36] Schild, 18.
[37] *Ibid.*, 104.
[38] Schild, 18.
[39] *Ibid.* Schild discusses this transition plan throughout his analysis.

take over the state.[40] This was to occur through combining the offices of the Reichswehr Minister, the Minister of the Interior, which controlled the police services, and the office of the Chancellor into one powerful position.[41] This was to be the political component of the military dictatorship. However, Schleicher also had hopes that this new government would gain popular acceptance within German society. He constantly sought to increase the presence of the military in the social sphere. This was part of the logic behind the aborted Presidential party that he and Papen attempted to create in 1932. Furthermore, Schleicher was a staunch proponent of the army creating sporting associations in an attempt to increase the prevalence of military values in society, particularly among Germany's youth.[42] Additionally, the army's interventions into the economic sphere, which will be discussed in more detail later, were also aimed at the militarization of society. This process of attempting to generate support for a military dictatorship and supplanting social democracy with a form of populist authoritarian rule was overtly anti-democratic. It also shows how, with time, Schleicher was converting his critiques of the Republic and democracy into plans for its transformation or destruction. Indeed, as Schleicher acquired more power, his plans grew in scope and power. While a fully developed military dictatorship never materialized, there were clear attempts at its completion. The attempted militarization of society was a popular goal for many of the Reichswehr leaders, as was creating a new authoritarian government in the hands of the army, or a bloc sympathetic to their political views. Schleicher did eventually gain control of the Chancellorship, as well as the Reichswehr Ministry, but he felt that either

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[40] Carsten, 317.
[41] Schild, 56.
[42] Bessel, 33.

there was enough popular support for a military dictatorship, or that the army was not strong enough to defend this new authoritarian government. Nevertheless, this desire to transform the social democracy of the Weimar Republic into a military dictatorship is a clear indicator of the anti-democratic intentions of Schleicher.

EAST PRUSSIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

The coup d'etat against the East Prussian government, on 20 July 1932, was the clearest expression of Schleicher's anti-Republican sentiments. The Treaty of Versailles and the newly created state of Poland had separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany. This physical separation led to constitutional irregularities that gave the Prussian state more autonomy than any other province.[43] This allowed the SPD and the Centre Party to solidify their control over the region.[44] Thus during the Weimar Republic, the Prussian state became the "bastion of the social democracy."[45] It was this strong position of the Republic that the conservative forces within Germany sought to destroy. This had been a goal of the anti-democratic forces, and especially for the army and Schleicher, for some time. Despite the fact that it was actually Papen who orchestrated the blow against the Prussian state, the move could not have occurred without Schleicher's support. By the summer of 1932 he had managed to acquire enough power within the state, as to exercise a virtual "veto power."[46] Additionally, though Schleicher preferred to operate behind the scenes, he did possess widespread powers and influence over the state functions all of which he used to attack the Republic. The coup would have

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[43] Schild, 55.
[44] *Ibid.*, 55.
[45] DKS, 156.
[46] Craig, Carsten, and Geyer all discuss Schleicher's powerful position throughout their works.

been impossible without the support of the Reichswehr, and therefore without the knowledge and consent of Schleicher. Also, his dislike of the so-called German-Prussian dualism was well documented, through his comments during cabinet meetings.[47]

The coup against the Prussian government was executed quickly and smoothly with the full support of the Army High Command and Schleicher. On 20 July 1932 Papen informed the leading Prussian Ministers that he had been appointed Reich Commissioner for Prussia by the President, through use of Article 48 of the constitution.[48] Additionally a state of siege was declared for Berlin and Brandenburg. Schleicher granted executive powers to Lt-Gen. Gerd von Rundstedt as the commander of *Wehrkreis III* (Defense Region III). Furthermore the army had authorized the use of various troops from the neighbouring *Wehrkreis II*, including units from Mecklenburg and Pomerania, if 'internal unrest in Berlin' necessitated their involvement.[49] Despite the relatively strong force that Schleicher and the Reichswehr leadership mobilized for the operation against the Prussian government, both within Prussia and Berlin, the Prussian Ministers did not resist the military's show of force, and there was no armed opposition.[50] As Reichswehr Minister, these actions would have been possible without Schleicher's direct involvement; he played an active role in the planning and execution of the coup against the Prussian democracy.

The attack on East Prussia is of particular importance when viewed in connection with the overall history of the Republic. It was the first large-scale military action taken

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[47] DKS, 24.
[48] Carsten, 368.
[49] *Ibid.*, 369. Orders from the *Truppenamt* to the chief of staff of *Wehrkreis III* dated 18 January 1932.
[50] *Ibid.*, 369

against the Weimar state since the Kapp Putsch of 1920. There was a great deal of political street fighting during the interwar period; however, the attack on Prussia was aimed at the destruction of the social democracy as an institution, and a fundamental alteration of its constitution. Here we see that the original pact made between the Reichswehr and President Ebert, which in many ways created the foundation for the Republic and guaranteed the non-interference of the government in army affairs in return for military assistance, was violated by Schleicher. Reichswehr leaders had pledged loyalty and assistance to the Republic in 1918, and had upheld this agreement numerous times, until Schleicher's rise to power. It was his anti-democratic sentiments and willingness to act upon these convictions that allowed the Republic to begin disintegrating. Prussia was the strongest bastion of support for social democracy and the SPD and its destruction was a significant blow to the overall strength of the Republican system, particularly because it was a great success for the strongest opponents of the regime, the NSDAP. Thus Schleicher's attack on Republican institutions in Prussia it was an undeniable sign of his anti-democratic nature. Furthermore, Schleicher's actions in this matter were a significant blow to the Republic, and signified the collapse of the founding agreement between the Reichswehr and the Weimar state. Thus Schleicher was central to the weakening and collapse of the social democracy in Germany.

This attack on Prussia was also integrally connected to Schleicher's defense and consolidation of the Presidential cabinet system. By weakening the SPD and the other parliamentarian forces, the coup also weakened opposition to the authoritarian system. Not only did it reduce the representation of the SPD in the Reichstag, but this attack also restricted the SPD's access to government institutions and their ability to influence the

direction of the Republic. After the coup, the Chancellor was given personal control over many of the powers previously in the hands of several socialist officials in Prussia, including command of Prussia's sizable police force and provincial finances.[51] It increased the amount of control that the Chancellor and cabinet had over the country. The Chancellor now assumed the positions of Reichskommissar for Prussia, as well as control over the Schutzpolizei.[52] This effectively placed these positions beyond the constraints of democratic accountability. The President appointed Prussia's Reichskommissar. Thus the defeat of Prussia's social democracy saw power transferred from elected officials to anti-Republican forces in the Presidential cabinet system. Furthermore, the attack on the Prussian democracy was to be a catalyst for Papen and Gayl to make reforms to the constitution, most importantly to create an 'independent cabinet' that would operate without parliamentary oversight or responsibilities.[53] This was to expand the powers of the cabinet even further.[54] However, these were temporary measures based on Article 48, which never developed into official laws. There was to be a larger and more permanent constitutional reform in the summer of 1933, which was planned by Schleicher and Gayl.[55] Indeed, if these reforms had gone ahead as planned, it would have seen the creation of a new independent Presidential cabinet, with very few ties to the Reichstag.[56] This new system did have a fair level of support amongst anti-democratic forces. The Reichswehr leadership supported this move, as did some members of the DNVP.[57] It is

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[51] Schild, 57.
[52] *Ibid.*, 56.
[53] *Ibid.*, 57.
[54] *Ibid.*, 58.
[55] *Ibid.*, 57.
[56] Carsten, 369.
[57] *Ibid.*, 369.

interesting to note that the cabinet members and supporters of this attempt to shift the locus of power, from the Reichstag to a cabinet and thus the President, never seemed to envision the possibility of a socialist President being elected. The lynch pin of the entire system presidential support. However, if Hindenburg was not the President in the future, this entire system could have easily been used by the Socialists against the anti-Republican forces. Thus, given the age of the Field Marshal, it suggests that Schleicher and his associates had a relatively short time line for transforming the government to a military dictatorship. Nevertheless, one of Schleicher's goals in the aftermath of the attack on Prussia was to strengthen the Presidential cabinet. It was viewed as an excellent opportunity to do so without having to directly include the NSDAP in the cabinet.[58]

It is important to examine fully all of the results and implications of the coup in Prussia. The coup involved an attack of the anti-democratic forces on the institutions of the Republic. No longer content with plans and critiques of social democracy, these men took direct action. Schleicher's role in this attack is of the utmost importance to understanding the collapse of the Republic. As the Weimar state was created out of a union between the military and political forces, the failure of this pact severely undermined the stability of the Republic. This arrangement had withstood numerous challenges, like the Kapp Putsch, but was destroyed by Schleicher's anti-democratic sentiments. His failure to defend the Republic when it faced a direct physical threat marked a clear turn in Reichswehr policy. His anti-Republican sentiments also had important political consequences. The victory over Prussian democracy was to coincide with an intensive constitutional reform that would solidify a new anti-democratic

[58] Schild, 57.

Presidential cabinet system and severely limit the powers of the Reichstag. Thus Schleicher's anti-democratic sentiments and his position in the German state, as a political general, made him ideally situated to undermine the Republic.

ROOTS OF ANTI-DEMOCRACY

Many authors have written about the possible origins of Schleicher's anti-democratic nature. Schildt argues that it originated in the nineteenth century school of irrationalist thought that emerged in response to the rise of liberalism. He goes on to argue that as liberal ideology allied itself to the growing rationalist movement to justify its existence, the conservatives sought out "irrationalism" or what he terms "anti-liberalism,"[59] ideology that insisted that "life should have power over reason."[60] Irrationalist thought regained momentum after Germany's defeat in the First World War,[61] when liberal views of progress were under attack generally. The movement had been popular with the aristocracy since the nineteenth century, but after 1918 began to make significant gains with the middle class. Irrationalism, or anti-liberalism as Schildt labels it, came to the forefront of right wing politics in the aftermath of the financial crisis in late 1929.[62] Critics of social democracy stated that this economic collapse was a result of a systemic flaw in liberal democratic values and that they need to be replaced by an anti-democratic authoritarian regime to bring stability back to the country.[63] The irrationalist rhetoric certainly seems to be in line with the type of critique that Schleicher and his associates had of the Republic. However, this interpretation does not fully apply

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[59] Schild, 99.
[60] Oswald Spengler quoted in Schild.
[61] *Ibid.*, 99.
[62] *Ibid.*, 100.
[63] Expressed in numerous cabinet meetings recorded in Golecki's work.

to Schleicher: no mention of this irrationalist school of thought appears in any of their meetings during Schleicher's time as Chancellor, and it seems more like a convenient similarity in rhetoric than the source of Schleicher's anti-democratic nature. He was given to blaming any state failure or set back on the failures of social democracy. Additionally, the irrationalism argument really only serves to demonstrate a long standing tradition of combating liberal democrats in Germany, as Schildt is unable to convincingly connect Schleicher to this school of thought.

Overall, it seems most likely that Schleicher's dislike of democracy was a product of his background and experiences in the army, which was then brought to the forefront with the creation of the Republic in 1918. Michael Geyer has argued that one of the failings of the Reichswehr in the interwar period was the inability for the older group of Wilhelmine officers to integrate into the Republic successfully.[64] This seems to describe Schleicher perfectly. While not believing that his dislike of the Republic was due solely to his formative years being spent in the Kaiserreich, it is clear that Schleicher fits into Geyer's mold of a Wilhelmine officer that never fully accepted the Republic. He was a member of the prestigious Third Foot Guards and the General Staff in the First World War. Born in Brandenburg to a Prussian officer, Schleicher was very much a part of the Wilhelmine era. He, like most of the monarchist officers, were opponents of the Republic. Having the constitution of the Republic tied to the extremely unpopular Treaty of Versailles, which was very humiliating for a German patriot at the time, only served to make the new state even more unwelcomed for authoritarian monarchist sympathizers. Furthermore, Schleicher had developed a dislike for political parties during the

[64] Geyer, Professionals and Junkers, 87.

constitutional monarchy, viewing them as an impediment to the political process. Due to the long standing opposition of the socialists and communists to the monarchy, and their rise to political power in the Weimar Republic, Schleicher did not have much desire to work with them politically. Additionally one cannot overstate the fact that Schleicher was highly influenced by the anti-democratic, anti-communist army, which he had served in for almost thirty years. Through the army and its strong monarchial traditions, Schleicher's dislike of democracy was firmly entrenched.[65] It is important to note that the inherent anti-democratic structure of the army, which in effect is a dictatorship, pre-conditioned him against a democratic institution.

SUMMARY

Schleicher's anti-democratic sentiments influenced his entire interaction with the Republic. Beginning with the method of acquiring power within the state to his later plans to destroy social democracy, Schleicher's hatred of the Republic contributed significantly to the weakening of the state. He managed to assume vast amounts of power within the Weimar state, to have almost veto power standing within the bureaucracy. It is important to remember that even Schleicher's promotions and assumption of new roles were a blow to the democratic operation of the state, as he constantly sought to remove power from elected officials. This was most pronounced in his consolidation and building of the Presidential Cabinet system, first under Brüning and later under Papen. This system relied upon the direct support of the President for the cabinet and the use of extensive presidential powers to enable the Chancellor and his associates to control the country, effectively restricting the powers of the Reichstag. Schleicher's was effectively

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[65] Craig, 467.

transforming the state away from a democracy as much as he possibly could. Indeed, he did have stated goals to see the Republic transitioned into a dictatorship, possibly under the control of the military.

However, Schleicher was not content merely to change the Republic to suit his anti-democratic sentiments. He also allowed the other anti-Republican forces to attack the state, directly during the coup in Prussia. This act could not have occurred without Schleicher's and the army's support, especially given Schleicher's strong and well connected position within the state. Additionally, it had huge implications for the overall state structure. By allowing the NSDAP to dispose of the social democracy in Prussia it broke the initial pact made between the army and the state. Throughout the Republic's volatile history, the agreement that the army would defend the state against military attacks, in return for autonomy, had always held. However, Schleicher allowed his anti-democratic nature to influence his decision on the matter. The breaking of this pact, by allowing the NSDAP to attack Prussia, signified the end of the military protection of the Reichswehr for the state. This was a part of the foundation for the entire Republic, and because of Schleicher, it collapsed.

Schleicher's anti-democratic activities took two main forms: the restructuring of the Weimar constitution in order to restrict the influence of the Reichstag and its democratically elected officials was the first of these forms; and the general the attack on Prussia social democracy. Schleicher's decision to allow the Republic to be destroyed in Prussia, by the NSDAP, altered the very foundations of the Weimar state. By breaking the pact between the army and the state made in 1918, Schleicher destabilized the entire Republic. Not only did this question the loyalties of the Reichswehr, but also emboldened

the enemies of the Weimar state, like the Nazis. Thus Schleicher's personal dislike of democracy, and the Republic in particular, had extremely dire consequences for the fate of Weimar.

III. Revisionspolitik and Expansionspolitik

The Allied Powers drafted the Treaty of Versailles to conclude the First World War after Germany was militarily defeated. The treaty was extremely unpopular to most Germans. Included in the numerous clauses was Article 231,[66] which forced Germany to take full responsibility for the outbreak of the war, as well as a reparations clause that that imposed a settlement of 132 Billion Marks set in 1921, which ultimately necessitated American financial intervention. Additionally, under the provisions of the treaty, the Germans were limited to a 100,000 man army, the navy was drastically reduced, and an air force was completely prohibited.[67] The Allies also banned submarines and tanks.[68] However, the Treaty contained additional clauses that increased resentment within Germany. Germany lost all of her colonies, as well as vast stretches of European territory. Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France, while West Prussia, Upper Silesia and Posen were added to the newly created state of Poland.[69] Additionally, Danzig was made a free city, under the supervision of the League of Nations, and was a part of the so-called 'Polish Corridor', which physically separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany.[70] Finally, the border regions of Germany were to be de-militarized, as well as the entire left bank of the Rhine. Germany was also placed under the supervision of the Inte-Allied

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[66] Mary Fulbrook, The Divided Nation: A History of Germany, 1918-1990, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 31.
[67] *Ibid.*, 31.
[68] James Corum, The Roots of Blitzkrieg: Hans von Seeckt and German Military Reform, (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 97. Articles 170 and 198 of the Treaty of Versailles.
[69] Furthermore, the coal production of the Saarland was now under French control, until a referendum would decide the area's fate in the 1930s.
[70] Fulbrook, 31.

Control Council (IACC), which was to enforce the provisions of the treaty.[71] These provisions of the Treaty of Versailles would greatly influence Schleicher's foreign and domestic policies. Indeed like other German nationalists, he embraced a *Revisionspolitik,* which sought to revise the terms and conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. Schleicher's *Revisionspolitik* was fundamentally connected to his desire to expand Germany, both geographically and economically in the Central Europe. As has been stated before, Schleicher was a product of the Wilhelmine era, and the abrupt change in Germany's world political situation, after the war, was particularly difficult for the general to bear. Additionally, as a leading officer of the Reichswehr, seeing the army so drastically reduced in size did little to endear Schleicher to the new military and political realities under the Treaty of Versailles. Thus, as both a Prussian and a general, he had a strong desire to return Germany to its once powerful position within Europe.

This becomes more evident after examining his actions in the late Republic. From negotiations with the Western Allies, to economic policies and plans for the future development of Germany, *Expansions-* and *Revisionspolitik* were central to Schleicher's policies. These two orientations became most evident in Schleicher's economic program and foreign policy.

ECONOMIC POLICY

In the aftermath of the First World War the Reichswehr General Staff officers met in December 1918 to examine the reasons behind their defeat.[72] While the tactical and purely military issues of this process have no relevance here, the staff officers concluded that warfare was becoming more total, and that they would need the full support of the

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[71] Fulbrook, 31.
[72] Corum, 25.

economy for a future war. They insisted that anything less than complete coordination between the economy and the war effort would lead to defeat. Thus from the military's view the economy took on vital strategic importance to their plans for future warfare. Indeed, Schleicher had a large interest in the economy, for its military value and for its importance to his plans for repudiating the Treaty of Versailles and expanding Germany's hegemonic influence over their neighbours to the east and southeast.

The vast majority of Schleicher's economic reforms were designed to create a *Kriegswirtschft*, or a war economy. The extremely broad, and somewhat vague, program of *Arbeitsbeschaffungs*, or job creation, was the principle instrument of Schleicher's plans to bring the economy in sync with the military's goals for the future. While it was based upon sound deficit spending economic formulas, the program was aimed at specifically benefiting the army and war-related industries, not necessarily the German economy as a whole. Indeed, President Franklin Roosevelt was able to use so-called "make work" projects, like building the Hoover Dam and developing the American National Parks, to help revive the US's economy.[73] The *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogram* was a multi-faceted plan, which affected the German economy in complex ways, however it must be remembered that it was first and foremost a plan devised to allow the Reichswehr to re-arm and expand Germany's influence. While Richard Overy states in his excellent analysis of the German economy in the Late Republican and Nazi eras that 'interest group politics' played a significant role in economic policy decisions,[74] he only focuses on large scale businesses and agrarian cartels as organizations that were

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[73] James Roark, The American Promise: A History of the United States, (Boston: Bedford's, 2002), 863.
[74] RJ Overy, The Nazi Economic Recovery 1932-1938, (London: The MacMillan Press LTD., 1982), 12.

interested in shaping Germany's financial course. However, the Reichswehr was just as concerned in the economic future of the nation as these other groups, and must be viewed as a significant force in economic policy. Indeed the Reichswehr had such close links with many of the large-scale businesses that Overy discusses that these corporations were already representing the Army's financial interests without their contacts within the highest levels of the government.

Schleicher and the Reichswehr had an extensive program of defense contracts and subsidies with corporations sympathetic to the military. Companies like Rheinmetall, Bochum, Borsig, Krupp and IG Farben received defense contracts, with larger ones planned for the future. Krupp was allowed to begin creating secret, prototype artillery pieces that were specifically denied by the Treaty of Versailles.[75] Additionally, Rheinmetall, Daimler, Porsche and Krupp were also commissioned to build proto-type tanks that were used at training facilities in Russia.[76] While the implications of these contracts as re-armament policy and what this means as *Revisionspolitik* will be discussed later, these commissions do show that whenever possible Schleicher would divert funds to military related enterprises. Indeed, he was the guiding force behind the overall economic policy of the Reichswehr, which gave significant funds both to circumvent the Treaty of Versailles and to increase the "war potential" of the German economy.[77] As shown in Table 1, the army paid out significant amounts of capital expressly for the

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[75] Corum, 109.
[76] *Ibid.*, 109.
[77] Ernst Willi Hansen, Reichswehr und Industrie: Rüstungswirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und wirtschaftliche Mobilmachungsvorbereitungen 1923-1932, (Boppard am Rhein: Boldt, 1978), 204.

purpose of developing secret armaments, in direct violation of the provisions of the Treaty.

Table 1. Reichswehr Funds for Secret Armaments[78]

	To Krüger	*To the Reichs Chancellery*
1925	40 Mio RM	-
1926	35 Mio RM	-
1927	50 Mio RM	-
1928	73.7 Mio RM	80.2 Mio RM
1929	-	60.9 Mio RM
1930	-	64.9 Mio RM

From 1925 to 1928 the Reichswehr gave these funds directly to Captain Hans Krüger, who as a director of the Rhein-Elbe Union, was pre-positioned within the industrial sector to dispense secret armament contracts to other private firms. From 1928 on, these funds were managed through the Reichs Chancellery, as Schleicher and his associates acquired more influence in that office. This money was given to various firms for the express purpose of maintaining the ability of the German economy to produce war material and armaments.[79]

Both the increase in amounts and the direction of the funds reflect Schleicher's rise to power. As he assumed new and more powerful roles within both the Reichswehr and the civilian political administration in 1928 and onwards, the scope of these revisionist funds grew dramatically. As Reichswehr Minister, Schleicher had direct control over the distribution of these funds. This financial activity demonstrates an active economic policy aimed at *Revisionspolitik*. The high level of funds was only possible through widespread inter-ministerial support. The Reichswehr Ministry worked in cooperation with the Finance, Economic, and Job Creation Ministries to ensure continued

[78] Hansen, 201.
[79] *Ibid.*, 204.

funding for these secret armament programs throughout the financial crisis.[80] Indeed, the Reichswehr mobilization planners selected particular companies to receive these inter-ministerial funds. Table 2 shows the various sections of the economy that were targeted for military financial intervention, as well as a few of the specific corporations.

Table 2. Reichswehr Funding to Industrial Sectors, by Company[81]

Metal Works and Machining Industries	
Metallgesellschaft AG, Frankfurt	70. 86 Mio RM
Knorr Bremse AG	50.0 Mio RM
Rheinmetall AG	20.0 Mio RM
Chemical Research and Industry	
IG Farben	1,100.0 Mio RM
Karlswerke & Chemische Fabriken AG	80.3 Mio RM
Dynamit Nobel AG	37.625 Mio RM
Tank, Ship and Automobile Industries	
Adam Opel AG	60 Mio RM
Diamler-Benz AG, Stuttgart	50.36 Mio RM
Nationale Automobilgesellschaft AG	17.0 Mio RM
Ford Motor Company AG, Berlin	15.0 Mio RM
Mining and Oil Industries, House Construction	
Vereinigte Stahlwerke AG	800.0 Mio RM
Gelsenkirchener Bergwerks AG	263.0 Mio RM
Krupp AG, Essen	160.0 Mio RM
Deutsche Erdöl	100.4 Mio RM

Not only does this demonstrate a systematic militarization of the German economy, but also a substantial coordination between industrialists and the Reichswehr. Indeed, the German army had long standing ties with private industry, spanning most of the Imperial era. Under Schleicher's tenure as Reichswehr minister, and even before he assumed this post, he desired to strengthen these connections. Table 3 demonstrates only

[80] Hansen, 201.
[81] *Ibid.*, 227-8. These figures are cumulative from 1 January 1923 to 30 November 1931. Hansen does not demonstrate if these figures changed over time.

a few of the numerous close associations between private firms and the Reichswehr leadership.

Table 3. Reichswehr Officers and Industry Connections[82]

Officer	Corporation
Hans Krueger, Captain	Employee of Rhein-Elbe-Union
Möne v. Wrochen, Lt. Colonel	Rheinmetall
Rellstab, Lt. Colonel	Board of Directors for Siemens
Friedrich Muff, Major	Board of Directors for Daimler-Benz AG
v. Winterfeldt, General Major	Member of the Board for Berlin Karlsruher Industrie-Werke AG
Wegenführ, Lt. Colonel	Speaker for the Union of the German Employer's Federation
Karl Golücke, Lt.	Krupp-Gruson-Werk, Magdeburg
Schröder, General Major	Manager of the Central Germany Group for Electrotechnology (VdEI)
v. Tschirnitz, Lt. Colonel	Member of the Board of Directors for the Sachsenwerk Licht- und Kraft, AG

While this table shows only a few of the officers and their private sector counterparts, it does further illustrate the close partnership between the army and certain armament corporations. Overall, Tables 1,2, and 3 demonstrate the long-standing connections between the Reichswehr and private industry, as well as the level of importance that Schleicher and other leading army officers attached to this close association. For Schleicher, maximizing the 'war potential' of the German economy and coordinating it with the army's mobilization and re-armament goals were of the utmost importance.[83] Significant funds and resources were used to further his revisionist agenda, to create a *Kriegswirtschaft* capable of mass German re-armament and mobilization.

Schleicher also sought to group all of the heavy industry and new technology industries under firms that were sympathetic to the military. He devised plans in late 1932 to break up the steel cartels and the chemical trusts and to put them under the

[82] Hansen, 230
[83] *Ibid.*, 204.

control of IG Farben.[84] He believed that placing these assets under IG Farben's control would help coordinate the direction of the economy with military goals, because of the ideological similarities and historically shared sympathies between the company and the Reichswehr. This was also to be a part of Schleicher's new "Militarist and Capitalist Ratio."[85] Through a mixture of direct state control and the independent participation of selected private businesses that were deemed militarily acceptable, Schleicher and the army hoped to re-shape the German economy into a *Kriegswirtschaft*, or an economy that would be able to rapidly re-arm the army in the event of war or full scale re-armament during peace time. Schleicher definitely aimed at re-privatization of the economy, to a large extent. He hoped to turn many of the state run companies over to corporations, like Rheinmetall, Krupp and IG Farben, and only maintaining state control over a select few industries.[86] Through re-privatization, Schleicher hoped to increase military control over the direction of the economy and weaken the Socialists' influence in these matters.[87]

The *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogram* was particularly targeted towards achieving Schleicher's goal of re-structuring and reviving the economy for military objectives. In his radio address on the 15th of December 1932, Schleicher stated that his new program would centre on one goal: work creation.[88] However, these jobs would only be created in sectors of the economy that would contribute to the military's *Expansionspolitik*. Schleicher planned on building up defense industries, in various regions around the county, but particularly in Thuringia. This scheme was designed to guarantee that

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[84] Schild, 76.
[85] *Ibid.*, 77.
[86] *Ibid.*, 78.
[87] *Ibid.*, 78.
[88] DKS, 102. Rundfunkrede 15.12.1932.

Germany would have the necessary industries to re-arm, despite the damaging effects of the financial crisis, which threatened the country's ability to produce military equipment. Thus, with this idea in mind, Schleicher re-started copper production in Thuringia, despite the lack of international buyers.[89] Copper was a vital resource in the production of munitions, as well as numerous other war industries, like tank and aircraft manufacturing. This process was begun under Brüning and continued by Papen, but it was Schleicher who was in charge of directing it. In 1931, Brüning allotted 1.2 million Reichs marks for the program, with a further 1.8 million for 1932; an additional 3 million marks was to be used for the copper industry in Thuringia in 1933.[90] Furthermore, Schleicher was planning on another 5 to 7 million Reichs Marks for other industries deemed important to re-armament.[91] These funds, he maintained, were required for Provincial Defense, or *Landesverteidigung*.[92] The Thuringian copper industry subsidies demonstrate Schleicher's commitment to making the economy prepared for rapid re-armament.

While the many of the monopolies discussed previously, like the proposed IG Farben cartel, remained largely hypothetical and did not progress beyond the initial stages of planning, Schleicher was much more active in handing out grants in the late Republic. He created a vast agricultural development program designed to make Germany less dependent on imported grain and bolster the conservative regions of the country. Over one million acres were set aside for new farms in traditionally conservative

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[89] Schild, 76.
[90] *Ibid.*, 78. It is important to note, that these funds were in addition to the existent financial support from the Government. Also, in the aftermath of the financial crisis in 1929, there was less money for these types of subsidiary programs, which largely accounts for the seemingly small amount of spending for this industry.
[91] *Ibid.*, 78.
[92] *Ibid.*, 81.

areas. Eight hundred thousand acres were set aside in East Prussia alone, with a further 120,000 in Mecklenburg and another 100,000 acres throughout the eastern border region with Poland.[93] The areas that were selected for this new agrarian program are particularly indicative of Schleicher's militaristic intentions. He chose to strength these regions because of their traditional connections to the army, which he then wanted to re-enforce. These areas had always been bastions of conservatism, as demonstrated by their consistent support of right-wing political parties and institutions. Also a significant proportion of the aristocracy and conservative Reichswehr officers came from these regions. Additionally, by developing these particular regions, Schleicher increased the population of potentially conservative Germans living on the border with Poland. This again would have fortified the German border against the Poles. Schleicher thought in terms of the Social Darwinian struggle between nations, which pitted all racially defined nations against each other in a fight for survival. Indeed, Schleicher's Social Darwinist tendencies become apparent when he was announcing the creation of a new housing program targeted for these same eastern provinces. He stated that "this [the housing program] means in the first sense, the increased exploitation of our sparsely populated Eastern regions, in the spirit of the internal colonization of Frederick the Great."[94] An extra 50 million Reichs Marks were immediately added for the construction of new communities in East Prussia, Pomerania, and Mecklenburg.[95] Not only does this demonstrate Schleicher's commitment to increasing conservatism within Germany, it also

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[93] DKS, 103.
[94] *Ibid.*, 105. Radio address on 15 December 1932. Das bedeutet in erster Linie die stärkere Ausnutzung unseres dünn bevölkerten Ostens im Sinne der inneren Kolonisation Friedrichs des Großen.
[95] *Ibid.*, 103. Rundfunkrede 15.12.1932.

shows how he was willing to use government funds, and official government programs, to achieve his own goals.

Schleicher's *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogram* did meet with some opposition. Members of the Papen's cabinet were not completely in agreement over the direction of the policy. Gayl and Neurath came out against the type of subsidies and grants that Schleicher was initiating.[96] The former Finance Minister Dietrich opposed granting the money directly to private firms; instead, he wanted the funds to be under government oversight to ensure that the money would revive the German economy as a whole instead of just benefiting a few private companies.[97] The Reichskommissar, or Reichs Commissioner, for *Arbeitsbeschaffung*, Dr. Günter Gereke, proposed an alternative plan for economic revival involving a series of relief vouchers and a systematic tax credit program aimed at all sectors of the economy. In these ways, Gereke's hoped to boost the German financial system in general, not just target militarily significant industries.[98] However, Schleicher used his considerable influence within the cabinet to isolate Gereke from political allies and to minimize the latter's influence over economic matters. Eventually Schleicher was able to get enough support within the cabinet to get his own measures instituted. In his search for collaboration, Schleicher even began to look to the NSDAP. He sought to bring the Nazi's *Arbeitsdienst* expert Hierl into the cabinet, because he was a supporter of Schleicher's type of economic reforms. The opposition to Schleicher's proposals is important. It demonstrates that there were other ways of stimulating the economy that could have possibly produced better and more far-reaching

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[96] DKS, 104.
[97] *Ibid.*, 104.
[98] Schild, 93. Gereke stated his objections within the RFM on 20.10.1932.

results, but that these were rejected because Schleicher's expansionist desires influenced his decisions. He chose only to assist certain sectors of the economy, which he felt would most benefit his goal of creating a *Kriegswirtschaft*.

Additionally, Schleicher's trade policy with Germany's neighbours and other European states was an important component to his *Expansions-* and *Revisionspolitik*. Members of the Presidential Cabinets, Schleicher included, wanted to expand Germany's influence throughout Central and Eastern Europe. The most direct form of this was Schleicher's attempts at creating a *Zollunion,* or a customs union, throughout Central Europe. While from a fundamental economic perspective, this *Zollunion* appears to simply be a strategy for increasing trade and possibly reviving the economies in this region, it was actually an attempt to establish German hegemony over Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Austria.[99] The planned *Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftstag* or MWT, was designed to facilitate German economic domination of the other three countries. Numerous large industrial firms supported this decision, as they were eager to expand into new markets. It would have essentially created a customs union within central Europe that would have allowed German manufacturers to dominate smaller European markets. IG Farben, Krupp, and Rheinmetall were all in support of the MWT.[100] Thus through this expansionist-orientated customs union, Schleicher would have been able not only to strengthen the German economy for his domestic re-armament plans, but to establish hegemony over Central and Eastern Europe, first economically and then politically. This was integrally connected to Schleicher's overall *Mitteleuropakonzept*, which focused on systematically expanding Germany's economic, military and political

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[99] Schild, 62.
[100] *Ibid.*, 62.

control in Central Europe. Schleicher also connected this idea of a concentration on this region of Europe, with the proposed plan for *Agrarkartellierung* or agrarian cartelization of the Eastern European agricultural industry.[101] This program was an attempt to have German farmers and market prices dominate the smaller economies of Eastern Europe.[102] Additionally, Schleicher's focus on the centre of Europe was connected to his desire to revise the Treaty of Versailles. Expansion, even economic expansion, in Central Europe was viewed in relation to Germany's position compared to France. Economic growth and a possible German hegemony over their neighbours to the south and southeast would have strengthened Germany, challenged France's dominant position in Europe, and subverted the political and economic arrangements put in place by the Treaty of Versailles. Thus, the *Zollunion* was actually motivated by many factors. Schleicher was always searching for possible avenues for strengthening the German economy to enable rapid re-armament and mobilization of the army. Additionally, he sought to expand Germany's hegemony over their neighbours as a more overt form of his *Expansionspolitik*. Finally, the MWT was connected to revising Germany's position in European politics, which had been altered by the Treaty of Versailles. By strengthening Germany to the east and southeast, Schleicher hoped to increase their position in relation to France, and potentially challenge the European political and economic arrangements put in place by the Treaty of Versailles.

Schleicher's *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogram* was inherently expansionist because the army's plans to re-arm relied heavily on the economy's ability rapidly to produce enough weapons and equipment to outfit a modern military force for a war of conquest.

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[101] Schild, 63.
[102] *Ibid.*, 63.

Thus, under the title of 'Job Creation', significant financial aid was given to various arms producers, often with direct Reichswehr coordination. This resulted in building up certain sectors of the economy, like the chemical industry, steel production and the automobile industry, which would have aided any future re-armament program. The ultimate objective was the creation of a war economy, which would be able to quickly re-arm the army. Re-arming and expanding the Reichswehr, would have constituted dramatic violations of the Treaty of Versailles. Additionally, other aspects of Schleicher's economic polices demonstrate his revisionist desires to expand Germany's power more directly. The proposed customs union aimed at establishing the country's economic hegemony over their neighbours to the east and southeast. Removing tariff barriers was viewed as way to create new markets for German goods and part of establishing a dominant trading position with their neighbours. The proposed agrarian cartel that was suggested was also designed to meet this goal. This was a fundamental part of Schleicher's *Mitteleuropakonzept*. By strengthening Germany's position in the east, he hoped to revise their political situation, in relation to France and the Western Allies under the Treaty of Versailles. Thus, *Expansionspolitik* and *Revisionspolitik* inherent in Schleicher's economic policies.

FOREIGN POLICY

Schleicher's *Revisionspolitik* and *Expansionspolitik* were most evident in his foreign policy. His desire to revise the Treaty of Versailles, and the system of European politics that it created, as well as expand Germany's influence to the east and southeast, is reflected in his interactions with leaders of other European states, both large and small. Traces of *Expansionspolitik* and *Revisionspolitik* can be found in nearly all of his

initiatives, ranging from discussions at Disarmament Conferences throughout 1932 to re-armament policies within Germany. Schleicher did have concrete goals for the development of German foreign policy. First, he wanted to continue the effort, started under Stresemann and continued by Brüning, to revise the Treaty of Versailles.[103] Secondly, he hoped to gather more support domestically for a more aggressive foreign policy.[104] Finally, Schleicher wanted to pursue German claims for the freedom or peace and stabilization of Europe.[105] While the first goal of continuing the progress towards revising the Treaty of Versailles seems relatively straight forward, Schleicher desired much more than simply a moderate continuation of this progress. His policies served to rapidly accelerate *Revisions-* and *Expansionspolitik.*[106] Much of Germany's interaction with the Western Allies was to centre on an almost moral argument, about fairness, equality and national rights. Schleicher used this rhetoric, which implies a desire for collective security or international cooperation, for his revisionist goals.

This highlights one of the major avenues of Schleicher's *Revisionspolitik*: the rhetoric of equal rights (*Gleichberechtigung*). This argument of equality and morality was one of the central themes that Schleicher employed in his campaign to justify revising Germany's position under the Treaty of Versailles. Arguing that the treaty was unduly punitive and destroying the German economy, Schleicher used this rhetoric of equality to further his revisionist politics, which were aimed at allowing Germany expand its influence over their neighbours. This was strongly connected to questions of German re-armament, and military ratios in Europe. *Gleichberechtigung* was primarily targeted at

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[103] Schild, 61.
[104] *Ibid.*, 61.
[105] *Ibid.*, 61.
[106] Schmädeke, 183.

France's allies, the United States of America, Great Britain, and Italy. The French were unlikely to be sympathetic to any claims from the Germans for equal treatment, especially as they were the primary benefactors from the Treaty of Versailles, and saw these regulations against Germany as integrally connected to their national security.[107] However, US President Woodrow Wilson had often used this type of rhetoric after the First World War, and there was some degree of sympathy from the British for the German complaints. Indeed, Schleicher liked to present the issue of military equality, or German re-armament, as a moral issue (*Es handele sich also nur um ein moralisches Zugeständnis*).[108] Additionally, there were many within England who felt that relaxing some of the provisions of the Treaty would have been beneficial to the overall economic situation of Europe, and possibly relieve some of the political tensions.[109] Indeed, it was with these countries that the Germans had the most success. The American, British and Italians did state that they recognized the importance of the principle of *Gleichberechtigung*, but that they desired to see a progression to equal recognition over a period of five years.[110] This delay in the attainment of equal rights, particularly in military matters, was unacceptable to Schleicher, as a nationalist politician and commanding general of the Reichswehr.[111] Indeed, Schleicher wanted to see immediate

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[107] Sabine Jessner, Edouard Herriot, Patriarch of the Republic, (New York: Haskell House Publishers LTD., 1974), 45

[108] DKS, 21. This quote is from the 7th of December 1932, at a Minister's meeting.

[109] W.M. Jordan, Great Britain, France, and the German Problem 1918-1939: A Study of Anglo-French Relations in the Making and Maintenance of the Versailles Settlement, (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), 162.

[110] DKS, 21.

[111] *Ibid.*, 21. This was expressed in a cabinet meeting on December 7th 1932. Additionally, Planck and Koenigs voiced their agreement with Schleicher's rejection of the more than five year plan to *Gleichberechtigung*, at this meeting, as did most ministers present. This shows a certain degree of radicalism within the cabinet, due to the short

recognition of their "equal rights," and desired a five-year progression to full re-armament.[112] However, it must be stressed that the principle of *Gleichberechtigung* was the most commonly used rhetoric by the Reichswehr and the Presidential Cabinets under the influence of Schleicher, in attempting to politically revise the Treaty of Versailles. It is important to emphasize that in Schleicher's hands this concept was not simply aimed at achieving fairer treatment from the Western Allies and France: it was a calculated attempt at *Revisionspolitik*. This was the centrepiece of Schleicher's, and his supporter's, propaganda program targeted at the allies, to get concessions, especially military concessions. For Schleicher, military recognition was always the primary goal.

The Five Power Talks held in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1932 were extremely important for Schleicher's foreign policy. At these talks he hoped to make significant progress for his *Expansionspolitik*. On 14 June, two days before the conference started, Schleicher wrote an army memorandum titled "*Die Interne deutsche Ziele auf der Abrüstungskonferenz*."[113] Within this document Schleicher outlined six main goals that clearly demonstrate both his *Expansionspolitik* and *Revisionspolitik*. These objectives were:

1. The removal of Part V of the Treaty of Versailles[114]
2. Limiting the period of disarmament to a maximum of five years

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timeline that they were pursuing, and how strongly they voiced their opposition to any period of full disarmament stretching over five years. Indeed, rhetoric demanding equal recognition from the French became common in Schleicher's cabinet, as shown by Koenigs' comment to Planck, where he refers to *Gleichberechtigung* as "*die geforderte Anerkennung der Gegenseite*," (the demanded recognition from the [French]). That comment was in a letter to Planck, also on December 7th 1932.

[112] Jordan, Great Britain, France, and the German Problem, 149.

[113] "The Internal German Goals at the Disarmament Conference" written by Kurt von Schleicher, 14 June 1932. It was an internal Reichswehr memo, specifically written for the military delegation at this conference.

[114] This limited the size of the German military to 100,000 troops.

3. Full re-armament, including all weapons (tanks, aircraft, submarines and heavy artillery) that had been restricted by the Treaty
4. A grading of service for troops in the Reichswehr between twelve and three years[115]
5. Tabling the idea of a militia with three months of service for border defense
6. Removal of all restrictions on the Reichswehr budget[116]

If the French and other Western Allies had allowed these concessions it would have significantly altered the German military position. The Reichswehr leadership would have been free to completely modernize its units. With this newly equipped force the army would have become a much greater threat to Germany's neighbours, significantly advancing Schleicher's *Expansionspolitik*. Additionally, granting these concessions would have legitimized the Presidential Cabinet system. These revisions to Germany's military situation would have been the largest concessions from the West since the Stresemann era.

Overall, the Germans had wider objectives, at the conference. First, the German delegates presented a political formula, which would have seen Germany granted 'equality of rights' within a system that would provide security for all nations involved.[117] Second they aimed to remove all of the discretionary parts of the Treaty of Versailles.[118] This formula, which would recognize Germany's desire for *Gleichberechtigung* in return for a guarantee of French security, was highly controversial.

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[115] This would allow the army to still keep some troops in the army for longer terms, as well as include a junior level of troops for a shorter term of service. This would increase the pool of men that the Reichswehr could call up for military service, in the event of a war.

[116] Schild, 68.

[117] Jordan, 150.

[118] *Ibid.*, 149. In practical terms, this would have mostly effected the Reichswehr, and what types of armaments available to them.

Even though delegates at the Lausanne conference were still debating whether or not 'equal status' would translate into equal military status, or German re-armament, the French refused the proposal.[119] This prompted Schleicher to recall the German delegation from the Dis-armament Conference altogether.[120]

This highlights the nature of French-German and Allied-German relations in general. The French viewed their national security as fundamentally linked to a disarmed Germany and France's political and military hegemony over continental Europe.[121] In turn, the Germans would not be satisfied until their claims for equality had been met. This push for equality had both political and military goals. The Germans did wish to regain political power within Europe, but *Gleichberechtigung* also had military connotations that were centred on the re-armament of Germany, or at the very least, the achievement of parity in size and equipment between the armed forces of France, Great Britain and Germany.[122] Additionally, the Germans wanted to reduce, or optimally, stop paying reparations to the French.[123] The onset of the financial crisis and the disruption of foreign loans from the United States only served to increase the public pressure on the German government to get some form of concession on the reparation payments issue.[124] For the German politicians, Schleicher included, reparations became integrally connected to *Revistonspolitik*. This is significant because the German revisionist goals of equal recognition and reparation reductions were therefore connected to French guarantees of security. Thus European politics, until the end of the Lausanne conference, were

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[119] *Ibid.*, 150.
[120] Schild, 69.
[121] Jordan, 162.
[122] *Ibid.* 151.
[123] Schild expresses this numerous times throughout his analysis.
[124] *Ibid.*, 68.

governed by these two opposing forces. The French refused to allow any progress towards German re-armament, viewing the latter as undermining France's national security. The Germans became increasingly radicalized by the slow progress towards their desired 'equal rights.' In a radio speech given just after the Lausanne conference, Schleicher sharply criticized the French for preventing any re-armament of Germany, even for, what he termed, "defensive weapons" (*Verteidigungwaffen*).[125] Schleicher and his supporters desired certain key concessions from the French, including reduction of German reparations, re-armament of the Reichswehr, and political recognition of Germany. However, the French viewed these concessions as being detrimental to their national security.[126]

This was the political situation until just after the Lausanne conference and the rejection of the German formula, which would have seen the Germans receive concessions concerning 'equality of rights' in return for a commitment to a collective security arrangement in Europe. The important change in the foreign policy climate of Europe actually came from within Great Britain. British public opinion turned against the French, after English newspapers published the results of the Disarmament Conference in Lausanne. Indeed, as early as the January 1932, *The New Statesman* stated that there was a need "for unqualified recognition of the principle of equality of status."[127] *The Times* demanded "the timely redress of inequality."[128] These quotes are indicative of wider

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[125] *Ibid.*, 68. Radio address given on 26 July 1932. The term *verteidigungwaffen* was used to include weapons like tanks, aircraft, and submarines, along with artillery pieces and infantry arms.
[126] Jordan, 162.
[127] *The New Statesman*, January 30, 1932, quoted in Jordan, 149-50.
[128] *The Times*, February 10, 1932, quoted in Jordan, 149.

pressure that was applied to the British government, in favour of the German formula.[129] After one month of strong pressure from public opinion, the British government announced that they would be willing to accept the German foreign policy proposals.[130] Indeed the British had become receptive to the idea of German military equality since March 1932. The English had devised the MacDonald Plan to allow for German re-armament within an overall context of European disarmament.[131] This change in the British position forced the French to re-examine their rejection of the German plan.

Only this agreement between the British, Italian, and French governments to ratify the German proposal was enough to bring the German delegation back to the Disarmament Conference. Indeed Schleicher had become radicalized by the failure of the Lausanne conference, and declared that Germany was being treated as a "*zweitklassige Nation*," or a second-class nation.[132] Therefore the five powers met once again, this time in Geneva in December 1932. With a tentative agreement achieved, progress began on the pragmatic military details that the Germans were anxious to clarify. Far from a full acceptance of the MacDonald Plan, the Germans received permission to create a militia

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[129] *Ibid.*, 149.
[130] *Ibid.*, 150.
[131] *Ibid.*, 151. The Germans and French would both be set at 200,000 men armies, with only an 8 month period of service. Additionally, there would be parity between the French and Germans in terms of tanks and heavy artillery. The Germans were still prohibited from having an air force, while the French and English would have 500 planes each. This would have been enacted in phases, lasting until 1938.
[132] Schild, 66. Schleicher delivered this comment on 7 July 1932, in response to the failure of the Lausanne conference to achieve any concessions on the reparations issue.

of 5,000 men.[133] Schleicher still considered the granting of the three-month militia to be a "Christmas present" for Germany.[134]

These Five Power Talks were the centrepiece of Schleicher's *Revisionspolitik*. His internal Reichswehr memo of June 14, 1932 demonstrates his far-reaching goal to revise Germany's position under the Treaty of Versailles: it called for a massive re-structuring of the European military and political situation. Schleicher's ideal revisionist concessions would have seen Germany gain the military capabilities to establish its political hegemony over its neighbours to the east and southeast. These revisionist demands made at the Dis-armament conferences in 1932, were aimed at strengthening Germany's military for specifically expansionist objectives. Thus demonstrating just how connected *Expansions-* and *Revisionspolitik* became under Schleicher.

Additionally, it must be remembered that Schleicher's position within the Republic was so powerful by 1932 that it would have been inconceivable for these delegates to have acted without being influenced by his demands. The actions of the German delegations at these conferences were a direct expression of Schleicher's foreign policy ambitions. The head of the military delegation, General Blomberg, was in constant contact with Schleicher throughout the conference, and was given specific objectives to obtain directly from the Chancellor.[135] Indeed, these talks embodied all of Schleicher's revisionist goals, not just his military ones. He hoped to connect the issue of reparations to the so-called security question (*Sicherheitsfrage*) and *Gleichberechtigung*. He even went as far as to state that Germany could not continue to pay reparations as long as it

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[133] There were plans to see this figure rise, but they were not realized, due to the re-armament policies of the NSDAP in 1933-34.
[134] Schild, 66.
[135] Schild, 66.

was being treated as a second-class nation.[136] Thus in terms of Schleicher's foreign policy, all of his desired military, political and economic concessions hinged upon French acceptance of Germany's promise of security within a larger non-aggression pact with Britain, Italy and the United States. Under Schleicher the *Reparationenfrage*, *Sicherheitsfrage*, *Gleichberechtigung*, and *Expansionspolitik* and *Revisionspolitik* all became interconnected.

Germany's relationship with the Soviet Union was particularly important for Schleicher's *Revisions-* and *Expansionspolitik*. Since 1926 the Germans and Soviets had entered into a secret arrangement that allowed for the training of German pilots and soldiers on Russian soil in return for German technical support. This was extremely important to Schleicher's revisionist goals. During the interwar period, this was the single greatest avenue for the military circumvention the Treaty of Versailles available to the Reichswehr. From 1929 onwards, the Germans invested personnel and capital in the expansion of these combined Soviet-German operations. The Soviets spent over one million rubles from 1930-31, while the Germans funded the program for an additional 3.9 million Reichs Marks in 1929 and 3.1 million in 1930, to create the fighter pilot school at Lipetsk.[137] The Reichswehr spent 30-40 per cent of their total secret armaments budget at the flying school.[138] By 1930, the Reichswehr was able to draw up a list of 167 trained pilots, all produced by the Lipetsk school, who were ready for active duty.[139] Most of the men on that list went on to become prominent members of the Luftwaffe in the Nazi era.

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[136] *Ibid.*, 66.
[137] Manfred Zeidler, Reichswehr und Rote Armee 1920-1933: Wege und Stationen einer ungewöhnlichen Zusammenarbeit, (München: Oldenbourg, 1993), 172.
[138] *Ibid.*, 172.
[139] *Ibid.*, 338. The *Fliegeroffiziersliste des Reichsheeres* was created on 1 November 1930.

Indeed, of the 43 senior instructors at Lipetsk, 20 became generals within the air force.[140] Additionally, a panzer school was established at Kama and the Soviets and Germans also developed facilities to experiment with the further development of gas warfare. While the panzer school never developed to the same extent as the fighter pilot school, 40 graduates and instructors from the school achieved the rank of general in the Third Reich.[141] Nevertheless, the Germans did spend over three million Reichs marks from 1929 to 1930, while training on the 50 to 60 available American and English model tanks, purchased through official Soviet offices.[142] These programs were of the utmost importance to the Reichswehr leadership, as they were viewed as the foundation for further re-armament. Indeed, Lt. General Alfred Gerstenberg even said, "we desire Lipetsk to be, not only a school, but rather a trial station for all German constructions."[143] Similarly, General Ernst Köstring suggested that, "without Lipetsk no military aviation training would have been possible."[144]

This demonstrates the importance that the Reichswehr, and Schleicher, attached to these secret re-armament programs with the Soviet Union. As a senior general in the army, and later Reichswehr Minister, Schleicher would have had personal knowledge concerning the use of a significant proportion of the army's secret armament budget, like the funding of these camps in the USSR. The German Wehrmacht of the Third Reich was born from the Reichswehr schools at Lipetsk and Kama. The latter were vitally important

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[140] *Ibid.*, 303.
[141] *Ibid.*, 303.
[142] *Ibid.*, 191.
[143] *Ibid.*, 179. Alfred Gerstenberg said "Wir Wünschen in Lipeck nicht nur eine Schule, sondern auch [eine] Versuchsstation für alle deutschen Konstructionen," on March 20th, 1929.
[144] Zeidler, 302. Köstring stated this in 1948.

to the re-armament plans of the army. This highlights the military significance of the Soviet-German relations in the interwar period, but they were also an important factor in Schleicher's *Revisionspolitik* and *Expansionspolitik* from a political and foreign policy standpoint as well.

Schleicher's foreign policy towards the Soviet Union changed significantly throughout the early 1930s. As shown earlier through financial expenditures from 1929 to 1932, the Reichswehr clearly had a vested interest in strong relations with the Soviets. Schleicher also had revisionist goals that he hoped to achieve through Germany's association with the USSR. Schleicher planned to use Soviet assistance in pressuring Poland to revise Germany's eastern border.[145] This was the most important political objective that Schleicher hoped to achieve through maintaining relations with the Soviets. Both the Soviet Union and Germany had lost territory to the newly created Polish state, and German military leaders felt that the Russians would make a strong ally in their attempts to revise Poland's western borders created by the Treaty of Versailles. However, this desired revision was never attempted. Instead, the advances in Schleicher's *Westpolitik*, or negotiations with the Western Allies, negated the further necessity of a strong partnership with the Soviet Union. France's concessions to Germany, particularly the military compromises, lessened the importance of Soviet based training facilities. Schleicher believed that improved relations with the French and English could lead to more opportunities for revisions of the Treaty, than would further joint initiatives with the Soviets.[146] An expanded and re-armed German army could be more easily, and

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[145] Marshall Lee; Wolfgang Michalka, German Foreign Policy 1917-1933: Continuity or Break? (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1987), 150.
[146] Zeidler, 339.

peacefully, obtained through *Westpolitik*, than through possible military operations against Poland. The growing importance of Germany's relations with the western powers can been seen throughout 1932. As the French granted concessions that would have possibly allowed the Reichswehr opportunities to train and re-arm on German soil, Reichswehr involvement on Russia territory declined. In August 1932, Rheinmetall dissolved the technical cooperation arrangement with the state-run Soviet Heavy Artillery Union.[147] Also in June 1932, the Reichswehr began to plan for the eventual, but not immediate, closure of the Lipetsk flight school.[148] Thus, despite the military benefits generated through close relations with the Soviets, advancing *Westpolitik* took precedence over them. Through improved French negotiations, open re-armament, instead of just secret training, was possible. This was a significant and public revision to the Treaty of Versailles. Additionally, an openly re-armed German Reichswehr could then be used to achieve expansionist goals in the future.

Soviet-German relations during this period only serve to highlight the importance of re-armament to the Reichswehr and Schleicher. This was Schleicher's ultimate revisionist and expansionist objective. However, these goals were shared with more than just Schleicher. Ever since Germany was disarmed, the Reichswehr leadership sought to revise the dearmament regulations of the Treaty of Versailles. The leading Generals of Germany never thought of Reichswehr as national security force, simply designed to guarantee German national defense. Instead Seeckt and other generals adopted the

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[147] *Ibid.*, 338. Rheinmetall worked with the Heavy Artillery Union from 19 July 1930 to 6 August 1932.
[148] *Ibid.*, 339

Zukunftsarmee, or future army, concept.[149] This principle would guide the planning and identity of the Reichswehr throughout the interwar period. This idea of a future army was designed to make the maximum possible use of the 100,000 man army allowed under the Treaty of Versailles, for future expansion. These troops would become a *Führerheer*, or leadership army.[150] Every soldier would be trained to function at the next senior level, so that in the event of full mobilization, or re-armament, this cadre army could rapidly expand. Non-commissioned officers, or NCOs, would be ready to assume positions as lieutenants, while lieutenants could be promoted to captains and so on. This meant that the army was trained to think about re-armament and expansion on a daily level. This shaped the internal climate of the Reichswehr, making it inherently expansionist and revisionist. This army was being built for the express purpose of restoring Germany to its Wilhelmine power position. Indeed, Seeckt had not even envisioned a domestic role for the army.[151] The reforms and training that were instituted under Seeckt were clearly aimed at creating a large army capable of entering in to a great power conflict, not a small security force. He worked on improving unit communication, mechanization of the army, and developing combined arm tactics.[152] These are not the basic components of a security force. By 1923 the army had to formulated three guiding principles to achieve a *Zukunftsarmee*: cooperation between military and civilian administrations in preparing for comprehensive warfare; military organization of society; and the pursuit of armaments for the future, like planes, tanks and artillery pieces.[153] While the social

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[149] Geyer, Professionals and Junkers, 87.
[150] *Ibid.*, 88.
[151] *Ibid.*, 97.
[152] Geyer, Professionals and Junkers, 98.
[153] *Ibid.*, 98.

implications of this *Zukunftsarmee* will be discussed in the next section, the third point is of particular significance for Schleicher's *Revisionspolitik*. The only way for Reichswehr leaders to obtain these weapons they deemed essential to the future of the German army was through direct revision, or circumvention, of the Treaty of Versailles. By whole-heartedly adopting all of the tenets of the *Zukunftsarmee*, the Reichswehr became a significant factor in the push for furthering Germany's, and Schleicher's, *Revisionspolitik*. Indeed, the aggressive designs of the generals, Schleicher included, at the 1932 disarmament conferences, which aimed towards military re-armament, served to alienate some members of Schleicher's cabinet, like von Neurath and von Bülow.[154] This demonstrates that the pursuit of re-armament was extremely important to Schleicher, and its intensity in late 1932 was largely a product of his actions, as he was the leading proponent of this policy in the cabinet.

CONCLUSION

Schleicher's *Revisions-* and *Expansionspolitik* guided many of his actions throughout the Weimar era. Throughout the course of the late Republic, he was always driven by a desire to revise the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. First and foremost Schleicher wanted to alter Germany's position to benefit the Reichswehr and the nation's military potential. From attempts to improve trade relations to strengthen the economy, to the implementation of *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogram* or job creation programs, and negotiations at the disarmament conferences, Schleicher was always attempting to give Germany any military possible advantage. The latter was also directly connected to his *Expansionspolitik*. Schleicher hoped to re-arm and enlarge the Reichswehr so that it

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[154] Edward Bennett, German Rearmament and the West, 1932-1933. Princeton, NJ: (Princeton University Press, 1974), 237, 255-7.

could be used to help expand Germany's sphere of influence within Europe. Whether through political negotiations or through direct military force, an expanded and well-equipped Reichswehr was to be an integral component in Schleicher's expansionist ambitions. Schleicher's *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogram* and series of subsidies to various firms were motivated by a desire to strengthen the German economy, so that it would be able to rapidly arm the Reichswehr. His expansionist and revisionist objectives were most evident in Germany's foreign policy during 1932. The disarmament conferences became a dialogue between the Germans and the Western Allies concerning re-armament and French security issues. Schleicher viewed these meetings as the most important avenue for advancing his *Revisionspolitik*, even more valuable than the secret armament agreements with the Soviet Union.

Schleicher's *Revisionspolitik* and *Expansionspolitik* were particularly militaristic. Other prominent German statesmen, like Gustav Stresemann, had sought to revise the Treaty of Versailles for the benefit of Germany, but Schleicher had distinct militaristic plans. His *Revisionspolitik* was indeed a break with the more peaceful policy of Stresemann and earlier Republican statesmen. He wanted to achieve revisions of the Treaty, but ones that would do the most benefit to the Reichswehr, not necessarily Germany overall. Despite the fact that the German economy was still labouring under the weight of massive reparation payments, Schleicher did not seek *Gleichberechtigung* to reduce the sum owed to the Western Allies and thereby drastically improve the economic conditions within the Weimar state. Instead he wanted to achieve revisions for an overtly militaristic expansionist goal, aimed at creating a German hegemony over their neighbours to the east and southeast. *Revisionspolitik* could have significantly benefited

Germany in the late Republic. Instead, Schleicher used it to seek military advantages for war-like aims.

IV. Militarism

During the Interwar period radical nationalists like Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmidt believed that the military shortcomings and political disunity that caused Germany's defeat in the First World War could only be overcome through a total mobilization of the economy, civilian life and individual morale.[155] They believed that this coordination of society could be accomplished by means of militarizing the German populace: that is, by inculcating military values like obedience, discipline and self-sacrifice. Militarism was to play a major role in Schleicher's conceptions of political and social order during the Republic. It was the primary motivation behind most of his social policies. While militarism was clearly evident in a wide variety of Schleicher's actions, from his expansionist foreign policy to his desires for a military dictatorship, this chapter will deal specifically with Schleicher's attempts to infuse militarism into German society more generally. The re-militarization of society was the predominant goal of the Reichswehr and Schleicher throughout the interwar period. Social militarism was of particular importance for the army in the Weimar Republic because of the general social unrest and violent changes that were occurring within Germany. The so-called Bürgerkrieg, or civil war, between contending social and political groups that existed during the 1920s and early 1930s, intensified the feeling among Reichswehr leaders that social stabilization was required, and that this could be achieved only through militarism. It is important to emphasize that in this sense militarism does not necessarily mean introducing violence into civil society. Instead, the army leadership, Schleicher included, believed that militarism should operate as a unifier of German society, with any violent expressions

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[155] Peter Fritzsche, "Machine Dreams: Airmindedness and the Reinvention of Germany," American Historical Review, June 1993, 689.

being directed towards the Fatherland's external enemies, once domestic dissidence was first crushed. Additionally, the army and Schleicher had specific military plans and schemes that both required the militarization of society and promoted the latter.

In many respects the intensity of Schleicher's drive for militarism in German society was a product of the imperial age. As has been stated previously, Schleicher's personal identity was very connected to the Wilhelmine era. During the Kaiserreich, militarism was embraced by many segments of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy.[156] Manfred Messerschmidt contends that since 1871 the power of militarism had served to suppress the rise of true democratic liberalism and social democracy.[157] Furthermore, he contends that Germany did not fully develop a class based culture under the rule of the monarchy, because of the social power of the military and militarism.[158] Bearing this in mind, the decreased strength of the Reichswehr under the Treaty of Versailles, as well as the transformation of the Wilhelmine society and power position in Europe, was a serious blow to the pro-military segments of society. Indeed, the reduction of the German armed forces also resulted in a decrease in military values in society. Fewer people were employed by, or trained in, the army or navy, which dramatically reduced the army's social prestige. This was viewed as a major crisis by men like Schleicher, who believed it necessitated a response. Although the army would pursue a new push for re-militarization of German society, in many respects these schemes were designed to generate a return to the social status enjoyed by the Reichswehr during the Wilhelmine period.

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[156] Messerschmidt, 266.
[157] *Ibid.*, 267.
[158] *Ibid.*, 267.

Very early in the Weimar Republic the army sought to militarize German society. In their analysis of the outcome of the First World War, the army concluded that warfare would continue to be more comprehensive in nature, drawing on the resources of the entire nation and requiring every civilian to be mobilized for the war effort. Therefore, army leaders elaborated three main principles that they believed would govern future warfare:[159]

1. The [civilian] Government must be organized to facilitate planning and organization for the war;
2. The national economy must be organized for war, entirely; and
3. Military and society relations needed to be redefined.

The coordination between the civilian administration and the army was to occur on a more pragmatic, detail-orientated level, and the economic plans of the military have been discussed in previous sections. However, the third goal was the immediate reason behind the Reichswehr leadership's acceptance of Schleicher's active social policy. When Seeckt and the disguised German General Staff formulated the theoretical components necessary for the *Zukunftsarmee* they determined that there must be a military organization of society in order to overcome the social cleavages that had developed in the aftermath of the defeat in the First World War.[160] The priorities of the *Zukunftsarmee* and the overall future of warfare, as defined by the Reichswehr, clearly outlined a need for substantial social involvement. Additionally, in the event of a new war, the Reichswehr planned on creating *Reichsverteidigungsräte*, or National Defense Councils.[161] These councils would

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[159] Geyer, "Professionals and Junkers", 86.
[160] The components of the *Zukunftsarmee* are listed in full, in the Chapter Three.
[161] Schild, 102.

have placed the civilian administration directly under Reichswehr control, allowing the army to directly coordinate and dominate the military and social spheres.[162] The army hoped to guide German society through sporting associations and youth education programs. The Reichswehr leadership knew that without a substantial militarization of society, these councils would have been rejected. Thus for Schleicher, as a prominent general throughout the Weimar era, the Reichswehr's goals became his as well. The army viewed the increase of militarism in society as absolutely vital to not only the future form of the army, but for any possible military victory in the next war. This, then, can be seen as a major reason for Schleicher's strong support for the militarization of society.

Schleicher's propaganda had numerous arguments within its overarching theme. Schleicher and Reichswehr officers wanted a return to the old "insoluble bond to one's Oberste Kriegsherr," and lamented the new form of the rank and file of the Reichswehr, namely a contract-based, for-hire army.[163] They felt that an increase in military values in society would help create "soldiers" instead of simply "specialists of violence."[164] For these men, soldiers embodied German patriotism and devotion to the greater good of the nation, as defined by conservative elites. Men who simply joined the army for employment or personal motives that were not suitably nationalistic or patriotic were deemed undesirable. Additionally, Schleicher's push for militarism had racial undertones. While they did not become fully developed because of the rise of the Nazi Party to power, these racial elements were present in his social policy. Schleicher discussed the need for a militarization of society so that Germany would be better equipped to fight a

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[162] Geyer, 87.
[163] *Ibid.*, 87.
[164] *Ibid.*, 88.

Volkstumkampf, or a war of races.[165] Indeed, within the Reichswehr there were proponents for making the entire German populace into a *Volksheer*, or people's army. This was a development of total war rhetoric and a combination of Social Darwinism and traditional Wilhelmine power politics. Total war philosophy served to transform war into a complete struggle for survival between the opposing nations. For victory in this type of conflict, the militarization of society was viewed as the primary method to achieve full mobilization of the entire German race for a total war. Eventually, in early January 1933, there was even racial rhetoric targeted towards enemies of the German state, like the Jewish community or, as they were termed, the "*Judische Untermenschen.*"[166]

By means of his propaganda program, Schleicher wanted to build a new "*Staatsgesinnung,*" or a new fundamental attitude that celebrated the militarized state, founded upon the army.[167] This of course, was to be centred on militarism and "*Wehrgedanke,*" or military thoughts. While Schleicher and his associates remained largely vague about what these military thoughts were, it is clear that they desired the general populace to focus all of its nationalist thoughts through the Reichswehr, and to believe in military values like obedience, honour and sacrifice. There was wider acceptance of this new propaganda approach within the Reichswehr: Hammerstein, Marck, General Joachim von Stülpnagel, and General Wilhelm Groener all supported Schleicher's methods. All of these men believed that spreading "military thoughts" throughout Germany would eventually bring about the desired coordination between the military and society. They viewed this plan as a necessary pre-cursor to the re-

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[165] Messerschmidt, 278.
[166] *Ibid.*, 278.
[167] Schild, 102.

introduction of universal conscription. A fully indoctrinated and mobilized civilian populace was the foundation of the proposed *Volksheer*. While the generals did desire to see at least some military training for all levels of society, they did not want this people's army to engage in direct military combat. Instead, the *Volksheer* would be the unifying and coordinating force within the country, which would improve Germany's war effort in a total war. As stated earlier, this objective was not solely Schleicher's; it was shared by the majority of the Reichswehr leadership. The strength of this notion of building a new state attitude around military attitudes is demonstrated through Groener's statement that "the public task must be to organize the entire populace to fight and work." [168] This organization could only occur if society embraced more "*Wehrfreudigheit*," or military-friendliness.[169] To achieve this goal, the army, under Schleicher's direction, devised several specific programs and plans to give substance to their rhetoric of militarization.

The main thrust of Schleicher's program to militarize society would focus on the youth. Schleicher and other military leaders believed that the more impressionable youth would begin the re-militarization of Germany and strengthen the nation for the future. Schleicher outlined the importance of the youth in an internal Reichswehr memorandum written in March 1931. Titled "*Wehrhaftmachung der Jugend*,"[170] this memo contained yet another list of three tasks that needed to be accomplished:

1. The sanitation task: to elevate the *Volksgesundheit* or health of the populace.
2. The pedagogical task: to educate the youth in obedience and *Wehrgedanke*.

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[168] Messerschmidt, 268.
[169] Schild, 73.
[170] *Ibid.*, 73.

3. The military task: to train the youth to be auxiliaries for national and provincial defense.

These objectives outlined the aggressive "*Ausbildungsplan,*" or education plan.[171] They were designed to thoroughly militarize the youth, so that they would become life long supporters of militarism. Above all, the Reichswehr leadership wanted to instill a sense of duty to the fatherland for all youth. Schleicher and his ideological associates wanted to inculcate the values of discipline and sacrifice, combined with nationalism and obedience to the military in German society. Through the overarching concept of militarism there was also an important racial hygiene component. This desired elevation of the *Volksgesundheit* was an expression of eugenic science and Social Darwinism being applied to military youth policy. For Schleicher, the health, or the racial health, of the nation's youth became a direct indicator of Germany's military capabilities and strength. This further explains the importance attached to the youth programs, and the need for "soldierly obedience" among Germany's young people. Despite the onset of the financial crisis, Schleicher was able to find an additional 1.5 million Reichs Marks to give to the newly created *Reichskuratorium für Jugendertüchtigung*," or National Youth Training Office.[172] This office primarily ran youth sporting groups and scouting troops, with militaristic overtones. Indeed, it resembled the Hitler Youth, except it promoted loyalty to the Reichswehr, not the NSDAP or Hitler. The Brüning government, under the influence of Schleicher, agreed to provide funding for this new office.[173] Furthermore, to ensure that this important opportunity for militarization of society was fully utilized, Schleicher

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[171] Schild, 73.
[172] *Ibid.*, 74.
[173] *Ibid.*, 74.

placed his loyal subordinate Joachim v. Stülpnagel in charge.[174] This guaranteed that this program would be run in coordination with the goals outlined in Schleicher's memorandum, and would be a strong militarizing force among Germany's youth.

Additionally, elements of the work creation and Winter Relief programs were aimed at the so-called "canalization of society for militarism. Through Schleicher's powerful position within the late Republic, the army was able to take over many of the public aspects of these aid programs. The labourers who worked in the *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogram* were housed in military barracks and were under the Reichswehr's supervision and oversight.[175] The army was also directly in charge of the distribution of the *Winterhilfe* food and supplies to relieve the effects of the financial crisis on the German populace.[176] Thus many Germans, who were deep affected by the financial crisis, came to regard the military as their life support. Furthermore, under the *Winterhilfe* title, the army was able to obtain a 1.8 million RM increase in military pensions.[177] While the distribution of the *Winterhilfe* did not directly contribute to the ideological indoctrination of the masses, it did generate some popular support and positive feelings towards the Reichswehr. Through increased contact with the army the general populace became more familiar and accepting of a military presence in their lives.

All of these programs were aimed at increasing the sympathy for the military within German society. By means of its control over the basic means of financial and material assistance, the Reichswehr subjected more and more Germans to military

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[174] Schild, 74.
[175] *Ibid.*, 74.
[176] *Ibid.*, 75.
[177] *Ibid.*, 75.

propaganda and discipline. It thereby benefited both symbolically and materially. Despite the fact that it was the SPD and KPD who spearheaded the push for these types of programs,[178] the army received the majority of the credit for such aid because it actually distributed the assistance. In this sense the physical means of the aid delivery was the most important component of the program, not the overarching patron.

Schleicher believed that militarism could be used to heal the deep social cleavages in Weimar Germany. The nature of the defeat in the First World War and its domestic political consequences created a highly volatile social climate during the interwar period. The preeminence of the Socialists and political left during the Revolution and after the creation of the Weimar Republic, had alienated and radicalized the political right. These political tensions between the newly elevated left and the weakened traditionally dominant right often led to direct physical violence, which characterized the so-called Bürgerkrieg, or civil war. Though Schleicher aimed to seek unity among all Germans, his strategy of militarization would be a victory for the conservative forces. For it was precisely the strength of the socialist and communist forces in the Bürgerkrieg, which heightened Schleicher's desire to militarize the country and defeat political left wing. While in power, Schleicher was bombarded with appeals for his assistance in the struggle against the communists. The Thuringian State Minister Fritz Sauckel wrote to him in early December 1932 with a "warning about the state hostile communist movement."[179] Sauckel believed that in order to fight the communists, politically and militarily, the government needed to declare a state of emergency.[180] Additionally, he wrote, and

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[178] DKS, 97.
[179] *Ibid.*, 60. This comment was in a letter to Schleicher, dated 8.12.1932.
[180] DKS, 40.

Schleicher later agreed, that "the propaganda of destruction" needed to be fought with "the propaganda of discipline and order."[181] This was very popular rhetoric within Schleicher's circle of associates. He believed that militarism was ideally suited to combat the "destructive powers of Bolshevism."[182] Military values would give the populace the personal fortitude and discipline to fight the "general loss of morality" that communism represented.[183]

The ultimate expression of Schleicher's plan to use militarism in his political battle against the power of the political left was his public appeal for a *Kameradschaft*. This was the centre-piece of his militarization of society as a whole. While the youth programs were aimed at one specific segment of the populace, this rhetoric of *Kameradschaft* was targeted towards all Germans. The *Kameradschaft* was to be a community of all Germans, united by militarism to become the ultimate weapon against the KPD and the persuasive communist rhetoric of collectivity and equality. This conservative *Kameradschaft* was to combine the communal nature of socialism with nationalism and militarism under the hegemony of the Reichswehr. The *Kameradschaft* would be the single greatest method for 'constructing the will' (*Aufbau des Willens*).[184] While Schleicher's official role as Chancellor was too short to see this program enacted in its full extent, its announcement was framed by a rhetoric of public sacrifice for the common good and appeals to *Volksverbundenheit* (national unity).[185] The appeals for the *Kameradschaft* were based on the popular book *Ideen von 1914,* written by Johann

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[181] *Ibid.*, 39.
[182] *Ibid.*, 39.
[183] *Ibid.*, 39.
[184] *Ibid.*, 41.
[185] DKS, 40.

Plenge. In his book, Plenge argues for increased unity within Germany, stating that it was absolutely necessary for solidarity among Germans following the catastrophic events of the defeat in the First World War.[186]. The *Kameradschaft* was a natural progression of the popular right wing critique of socialist thought, which argued that Marxism divided German society and thus prevented national unity.[187] Schleicher believed that militarism could unite socialism and nationalism to the benefit of the Reichswehr and that the *Kameradschaft* was the best way to accomplish this task. Thus the Bürgerkrieg served to intensify the army's push for militarism in society, as many officers believed that the strength of the socialists and communists necessitated a response.

One of the most controversial and important aspects of Schleicher's plan for a militarization of society was his proposal for the creation of para-military organizations (PMOs). Schleicher believed that these kinds of associations, which served the dual purpose of cultivating soldierly and military values, were ideally situated to increase militarism in society. Schleicher viewed them as an extremely important method for the canalization of military values into the German populace.[188] The PMOS were a part of a larger inter-mixing of military and civilian sphere. Indeed, the ultimate objective of them, and similar programs, was to obscure divisions between these spheres are a means of bringing about the militarization of the German nation. These 'patriotic defense associations' (*vaterländische Wehrverbände*) served two main purposes from the perspective of Reichswehr leaders. First, they allowed the Reichswehr to build loyal PMOs that would augment the existing army and thus overcome the 100,000-man

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[186] Schild, 104.
[187] *Ibid.*, 104.
[188] Messerschmdt, 271.

restriction imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. Second, these groups were viewed as the best means by which to expose as large a portion of society as possible to military values and discipline, at a time when the Reichswehr could not draft large numbers of recruits into its services. These groups had existed in varying numbers since the end of the First World War, and many of them were composed of veterans of the imperial army and were thus sympathetic to the Reichswehr. The latter recruited them into its ranks and organized them into *Grenzschutz* regions, or Border Defense regions.[189] Included in these border units were organizations like the Stahlhelm, the Deutsche Freiheitsbewegung, the Deutsche Landvolkspartei, the Selbstschutz, the Landesschützenverband, the Reichsbanner and the Sturm Abteilung or SA.[190] The majority of these organizations were dominated by the desires of the Reichswehr; however, the SA proved to be problematic. While the *Grenzschutz* may have been beneficial for Germany's national defense capability, it served to highlight the fundamental flaw of the Reichswehr's position in the Weimar Republic. The 100,000 man restriction of the Treaty of Versailles created an incomplete monopoly of violence for the army.[191] While the Reichswehr was the legally authorized arbiter of physical force within the Republic, its reduced size meant that it was unable to police all of the various militant organizations that existed in interwar Germany. Schleicher was aware of the fact that the army would be unable to defend the state apparatus against a challenge from both the NSDAP/SA and the Communists at the same time,[192] and thus it needed to cooperate with at least one of the

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[189] James Diehl, Paramilitary Politics in Weimar Germany, (Don Mills: Indiana University Press, 1977), 195.
[190] *Ibid.*, 195.
[191] Geyer, Professionals and Junkers, 99.
[192] Schild, 119.

sympathetic *Wehrverbände* in order to re-acquire their monopoly on violence. Thus under Schleicher, the Reichswehr began to fund the Stahlhelm directly, in hopes that this organization would be able to expand, and the SA would not be required for border defense; however, this was not successful. In this respect the announcement of the militia units that were to be formed as a result of the December 1932 disarmament conference was a double-edged sword. These militia forces that would grouped under the *Grenzschutz*, or Border Guards, were desirable from a purely military view, because they increased the defensive potential of Germany in a future war with any of its neighbours. Additionally, this revision increased the number of legally permissible armed troops within the country. From a purely militaristic approach, the new militia was a great success, as more people could be brought in contact with the Reichswehr and military values. However, while this revision of the Treaty of Versailles theoretically allowed the Reichswehr to increase the number of troops that were loyal to the army directly, in actuality it meant more power for the SA, which made up the largest contingent of these new militia units. The *Kriegsleistungsgesetz*, or Auxillary Service Law,[193] passed in late 1932, was supposed to enhance the authority of the Reichswehr in Germany, by creating these new militia units. Instead, it contributed to the rise in membership and popularity of the SA. Additionally, in some *Grenzschutz* units 50% of the troops involved were SA members.[194]

This posed a serious problem for the Reichswehr. While Schleicher and most of the army leaders were eager to pursue a more complete militarization of society with the inclusion of PMOs, it was the use of these organizations and the necessary involvement

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[193] *Ibid.*, 104.
[194] Geyer, Professionals and Junkers, 99.

of the SA that weakened the army's position within the Republic. Schleicher believed that the 100,000 man army, and the new restrictions on the length of service in the Reichswehr,[195] limited the ability of the army to militarize society. In this context, the PMOs became the best way to increase the German populace's exposure to militarism and military values. As the NSDAP/SA and Schleicher thought along similar ideological lines, as will be discussed in the next section, and due to the SA's size and strength, Wehrmacht leaders felt that the PMOs needed to be included as an integral part of the Reichswehr's militarization plans. With official Reichswehr support, the Nazis were allowed direct access to right wing conservative circles within Germany. This official support legitimized the SA, which was now able to draw supporters from new sectors of society.[196] The Reichswehr actively encouraged participation in these organizations as a method of increasing civilian encounters with military values and discipline.

However, the drive for militarization via the PMOs had dire consequences for both the position of the army and the Republic overall. The SA expanded dramatically into these new "official" organizations, like the *Grenzschutz*, the newly created militia in 1932, and local military sporting associations throughout Germany. The Reichswehr encouraged the SA involvement in all of these organizations, as the army needed their size and strength to militarize society as much as possible and to provide border security. Additionally, Schleicher viewed the SA as sympathetic and important to his efforts to

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[195] The Treaty of Versailles required soldiers to be involved with the Reichswehr for a minimum of 5 years. This was included as a provision of the treaty to prevent the Germans from using the Reichswehr as a militia training program, to create a vast army of conscripts that could be mobilized for active duty in the event of a war.
[196] Bessel, 67.

militarize German society; he, therefore, generally supported them.[197] However, while this advanced Schleicher's militarization of society and provided valuable military assistance for border security, this increase in the powers and membership of the SA turned the latter into a direct threat to the Reichswehr's control over the means of violence within the Republic. Thus, Schleicher's militarism was an important factor in the subversion of the Weimar Republic. His pursuit of the militarization of society through PMOs led to increased prestige and membership of the avowedly anti-Weimar NSDAP/SA. Additionally, the training, equipping, as well as partial official recognition of the SA through the *Grenzschutz* further aided the Nazi party and its political army, which threatened the security of the Weimar Republic, in the parliamentary realm.

An underlying aim in Schleicher's militarization goal was overcoming the problem of physicality. Civilian exposure to the army, its values and discipline, was the primary goal of most of his plans. Military service is a primarily physical act. The wearing of a uniform, marching in unison with a large body of men, and shooting a rifle are all, on their most fundamental level, defined by their physical nature. While, these acts have strong symbolic meanings as well, Schleicher's plans primarily concerned overcoming the reduced access to the physical aspects of the military. However, the Reichswehr was unable to expose a significant proportion of society to these actions, because of the 100,000man restriction of the Treaty of Versailles. To men like Schleicher, the reduction of the ranks constituted a decrease in the general appreciation for military "virtues." Thus, the overall insecurity of the Reichswehr in the interwar

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[197] Schleicher took action to remove Brüning from office once it was clear that he no longer viewed working with the NSDAP/SA as beneficial for the Republic. Additionally, Schleicher worked to get the ban on the SA lifted in 1932, because of the organizations importance to his militarization plans, and to the strength of the *Grenzschutz*.

period can be traced to the army's restricted control over most aspects of German society. The recruitment of the PMOs was one means of counteracting this perceived reduction in the militarization of society. Similarly, the youth programs and *Winterhilfe* were aimed at solving the problem of the reduced physical interaction between the army and the civilian populace. While mere physical contact would not guarantee conversion to a pro-military standpoint, the Reichswehr and Schleicher operated from this assumption. Nevertheless, exposure or direct military-society contact remained a fundamental characteristic in all of Schleicher's militarization plans.

However, the central phenomenon of Schleicher's particular type of militarism was its active expansionism. Schleicher firmly believed that society needed to be thoroughly militarized and brought in sync with military values and goals. It was not, he maintained, to be a latent undercurrent in society; instead, he wanted it to be an active life philosophy in Germany. Stemming from the military's assessment of the causes for defeat in the First World War, Schleicher's "philosophy" maintained that future total warfare would require the complete coordination of society for the benefit of the war effort. Furthermore, the principles of the *Zukunftsarmeekonzept*, which was adopted for the interwar Reichswehr, was the principal expression of their new plan to militarize German society. Additionally, his desires for a wider embrace of military values in society were a product of the political turmoil of the Bürgerkrieg and the social cleavages that were developing between the political left and right in Germany. Schleicher saw militarism and the army as a potential stabilizing factor in the violent social struggle that occurred throughout most of the Republic. These issues, of future war plans, civilian society's acceptance of militarism, and social turmoil were phenomena to which his

militarism was a response. All of his militarization programs, including the PMOs, *Winterhilfe*, extensive youth programs, or National Defense Councils, were all aimed at improving the military potential of Germany and winning a future total war. Ultimately, this drive for a militarized society would have significant political repercussions. The strengthening of the NSDAP/SA through Schleicher's militarization and border defense plans aided the Nazi Party in their campaign to destroy the Republic. Indeed, the Nazis developed into the greatest threat to the Reichswehr's incomplete monopoly of violence. Schleicher pursued his military policies, therefore, in a rather reckless fashion, which eventually undermined the position of the Reichswehr, and greatly strengthened the NSDAP. Perhaps the ideological similarities between Schleicher and the Nazis blinded him to the danger that the NSDAP presented.

V. Schleicher and the Nazi Movement

Many historians who study the Weimar Republic largely focus on the actions of Hitler and the NSDAP, and their attacks on the social democracy, and omit the important relationship that dictated the fate of Weimar. The Republic's fall was the product of a complex organizational dynamic between Schleicher and his supporters in the Reichswehr and the state, on the one hand, and Hitler and the NSDAP, on the other. Schleicher's ideological position and its effect on the course and structure of the Republic were intimately related to ideology and the Nazi movement. This interpretation will highlight the numerous ideological similarities and congruencies between Schleicher and the NSDAP, which had a significant impact on their political interactions. After examining the ideological similarities between the two the army and the Nazi Party, and demonstrating the organizational connections between them, this section will recast the traditional Hitler-centred interpretation of the collapse of the Republic as a power struggle for control over the emerging Reichswehr/NSDAP power apparatus. Both men attempted to make connections with members in the other organization's leadership circle to fully control the merging Reichswehr and NSDAP This was shown through Hitler's meetings with Papen and Schleicher's attempted alliance with Straßer. Thus by re-constructing Schleicher's influential and powerful position, which has been largely omitted by historians of this period, we gain new clarity and focus on the final phases of the Weimar Republic.[198] In contrast to the traditional view, which emphasizes the way in which Hitler achieved power through eventually defeating Republican opposition and "seizing" the Chancellery during the events of 30 January 1933, this section will argue

[198] Kolb, Carsten, and Craig all largely omit Schleicher's role in the downfall of the Republic.

that 30 January 1933 actually marked the final demise of Schleicher's rival leadership group and his plans to assert control over the new Right wing political power structure.

IDEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP

First, the ideological similarities between Schleicher and Hitler and the NSDAP must be examined to provide the basis for later analysis of the political interactions of the two men and their respective associations. On a theoretical or ideological level the Nazi Party was ideally positioned for cooperation with Schleicher. While historians have extensively debated the exact nature of Nazi ideology, most point to certain prominent features. These characteristics easily overlapped with Schleicher's own ideological project. Michael Geyer states that the Reichswehr leadership and the NSDAP "shared a desire for the re-armament and violent aggrandizement of Germany."[199] Schleicher's *Expansionspolitik* was extremely similar to Hitler's expansionist goals. Both men desired to militarily expand Germany, at the expense of her neighbours. Additionally the re-armament and expansion of the Reichswehr was an important component to Schleicher's attempted revisions of the Treaty of Versailles, of which Hitler was also a staunch supporter. Geyer concludes that re-armament and expansionism were the principle reasons for all NSDAP-Reichswehr cooperation and interaction.[200] Indeed, Hitler had planned to establish German hegemony over the rest of Europe in the early 1920s, and recognized that the Reichswehr would be an important partner in this endeavor. As was stated previously, the Reichswehr leadership set down expressly expansionist goals directly after the First World War, which served to shape the internal culture of the army.

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[199] Michael Geyer, "Etudies in Political History: Reichswehr, NSDAP and the Seizure of Power" in Peter Stachura The Nazi Machtergreifung, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), 101.
[200] *Ibid.*, 101.

Furthermore, the structure of the Reichswehr, which was based on rapid expansion and re-armament of the armed forces, helped to create a thoroughly expansionist and revisionist organization, from the lowest ranks to the highest generals. Geyer contends, "re-armament defined the army in the interwar era."[201] The Nazis received similar revisionist and expansionist indoctrination in the form of propaganda newspapers, mass rallies and party speeches, which began with a completely expansionist-orientated leadership under the direction of Hitler. This would ultimately provide an important bridge between the conservative Reichswehr leadership and radical Nazis.

The Nazi re-armament rhetoric was a powerful source for much of the sympathy for the NSDAP within the Reichswehr. Due to the limited access to resources, such as new recruits and funding, during the interwar period, several branches of the armed forces were increasingly disgruntled, and thus very receptive to the Nazis' promises of expansion and increased military budgets.[202] The navy, artillery and some of the infantry based divisions of the armed forces were particularly enticed by the Nazis' expansionist rhetoric, as they were largely under-funded while the Reichswehr leadership pursued the development of a mobile mechanized army. Geyer states that in many cases, support of the Nazis was pragmatically justified. Within the limits of a 100,000-man army, there were relatively few opportunities for advancement; however Hitler's promises of dramatic and immediate expansion of the armed forces offered new potential avenues for promotion to young officers and soldiers, who were eager to progress up the ranks.[203] Also, many of the older conservative officers who remained in the army from the

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[201] Geyer, "Etudies," 109.
[202] *Ibid.*, 109.
[203] *Ibid.*, 111.

Wilhelmine era found that the NSDAP's expansionism served as a bridge for cooperation with the radical organization. It is important to emphasize that the Nazi Party's plans for military re-armament did not just coordinate with Schleicher's plans; they also met with a receptive audience in the Reichswehr more generally. This wide spread support of Nazi re-armament plans was an important factor in the later 'merging' of the two groups.

Schleicher and the Reichswehr shared a fear of the revolutionary political Left that served to provide a sense of urgency for all of their interactions. Schleicher was continually aware of the revolutionary potential of the *Arbeiterbewegung*, or worker's movement, especially after observing its ability to enact political change in the aftermath of the First World War. The NSDAP was a staunch opponent of the Communists and Socialists in the Weimar Republic, confronting them politically and physically.[204] The SA was constantly engaged in street battles with the various leftwing para-military organizations throughout the Republican era, while the NSDAP Reichstag deputies were outspoken critics of the SPD and KPD once the Nazi Party's parliamentary representation grew after 1928.[205] The Reichswehr had a similar aversion to cooperation with the political Left, barring any communist or Marxist para-military organization from involvement in the Boarder Guards, or *Grenzschutz*, and even refusing to work with the Social Democratic *Reichsbanner* because it was perceived to be too "socialist."[206] Kershaw states that the anti-SPD/KPD nature of the NSPAD did attract a considerable number of supporters, both civilian and military, including Schleicher. Furthermore, in his propaganda speeches and conversations in cabinet meetings, Schleicher clearly

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[204] Diehl discusses the NSDAP opposition to the Left wing throughout his monograph.
[205] Fulbrook, 61.
[206] The *Reichsbanner* was actually a Republican created military organization designed to assist the government against civil unrest.

demonstrated his deep hatred of Socialism and Communism, often calling the SPD "enemies of the state."[207] Additionally members of Schleicher's cabinet expressed their fears that German society would be tempted to join the SPD or KPD without the strong social presence of the NSDAP. Schleicher stated that without the Nazis he believed that the country would "march to the Left" (*nach Links abmarschieren*).[208] In order to ensure social stability, Schleicher maintained that Germany needed a "unified and sensibly led party" (*geschlossenen und vernüftig geführten Partei*).[209] The Nazis' opposition to the political Left enhanced their importance and attractiveness to Schleicher, his cabinet members and the Reichswehr leadership in general.

Both Schleicher and the NSDAP developed social policies principally based on radical nationalism. Although Hitler stressed the development of wider support within German society earlier than Schleicher did, they nevertheless both drew upon the long-standing concept of a National Community. While Schleicher's *Kameradschaft* never took on the racial overtones present in the Nazi understanding of a *Volksgemeinschaft* there are many similarities between these concepts.[210] Both Schleicher and Hitler aimed to unite all German society under a common nationalistic ideological framework, however each association aimed to help their respective benefactor. Directly after their defeat in the First World War, the Reichswehr determined that in a future war the coordination between civilian and military administrations would be absolutely necessary, as would the complete mobilization of the civilian populace for the war effort. Thus, for the Reichswehr, including Schleicher, social unity and coordination became

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[207] DKS, 155.
[208] *Ibid.*, 155.
[209] *Ibid.*, 155.
[210] Schild, 104.

tied to the military potential of Germany. The Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* was similarly dominated by nationalism; however by contrasting with the notion of *Kameradschaft* it took on a 'racial' definition of the nation. Hitler wanted the unification of the German *Volk* under the NSDAP's ideology, NSDAP and the Reichswehr embraced a similar purpose. The *Volksgemeinschaft* and the *Kameradschaft* shared a focus on the importance of the support and coordination of society for each respective organization's future. Reichswehr leaders believed that they military required social unity for its mobilization plans, just as the Nazis felt that national racial unity would serve to increase their party's and movement's strength. Both of these goals could be accomplished either through the *Kameradschaft*, with the introduction of some racial ideology, or the *Volksgemeinschaft*, with a continued emphasis on military obedience and values. Geyer argues that the NSDAP and the Reichswehr in fact needed each other.[211] The army required the social unity offered by the more successful *Volksgemeinschaft*, while the Nazis needed the legitimizing and strengthening effects that cooperation with the Reichswehr provided.[212] The relative absence of social support for Schleicher's *Kameradschaft* and the wide spread success of the *Volksgemeinschaft* served to increase the appeal of the Nazis to the Reichswehr leadership overall, not just to Schleicher.

The Nazi emphasis on the *Volksgemeinschaft* was important for the popular social support of the party. While some historians argue that the Nazis were a chameleon party, being many things to many people, they overlook the fact that the Nazis targeted specific segments of society and that the Nazis drew on varying levels of support among those that responded to the NSDAP's messages. Based on his extensive examination of the

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[211] Geyer, "Etudies," 119.
[212] *Ibid.*, 119.

official Nazi newspaper, the *Völkische Beobachter*, Detlef Mühlberger states that the NSDAP was first and foremost a middle class party, or a *Mittelstandpartei*.[213] From 1929 to 1932, the Nazis made their most significant gains in popularity. During this period all of the bourgeois parties lost supporters to the NSDAP, with the *Reichspartei des deutschen Mittelstandes* or the German Middleclass Party, suffering primarily.[214] Despite its claims to be a *Volkspartei*, or people's party, the NSDAP created a strong party platform designed especially to attract the middle class. Specifically targeting civil servants who lost their jobs due to the onset of the financial crisis, as well as small business owners who were under pressure from larger warehouse stores, the Nazis first built support within the older middle class, before they expanded their focus to the middle class as a whole. Point 16 of the "25 Point Nazi Programme" was aimed at combating large retail stores to protect small businesses and artisans. The Nazis also formed the *Kampfgemeinschaft gegen Warenhaus und Konsumverein*, or the 'Fighting Association against Department Store and Consumer Cooperatives,' to further attack large retail chains and solidify their support in this social group. Between 1924-5, 150,000 civil servants were fired by the federal government, with a further 600,000 from the various *Länder*. These civil servants were specifically targeted by the Nazis, through the "9 Point Civil Service Programme" announced in 1926, which promised to guarantee the 'freedom of expression' and 'improved rights' of the civil servants.[215] These groups became strong supporters of the Nazi cause, which help build *Mittelstand* support for the party in the mid-1920s.

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[213] Detlef Mühlberger, Hitler's Voice: The Völkischer Beobachter, 1920-1933. Vol. II, (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), 104.
[214] *Ibid.*, 195.
[215] Mühlberger, 187.

It is important to emphasize the point at which the NSDAP started to develop its middle class support. Beginning in 1925, the Nazis specifically worked to create a strong social backing for their party. Thus, by the time that Schleicher began to attempt to build support for the Presidential Cabinet system in 1930, many Germans, particularly the middle class, were already drawn to the NSDAP. From 1925 to 1933, the *Mittelstand* consistently composed 40% of the Nazi's membership.[216] The NSDAP's rhetoric of economic revival and fiscal growth for Germany was particularly successful within the middle class,[217] giving them a strong social basis that the Reichswehr, and Schleicher especially, desired. It was this type of popularity within a segment of society that Schleicher hoped to build for the Presidential Cabinet system in 1932. However, by this late date, NSDAP support had been too firmly established for Schleicher to make substantial progress in the middle class. Schleicher's failure to develop a concrete social basis for his regime only increased the attractiveness of the NSDAP to the Reichswehr leadership, as the military still believed that social unity was absolutely necessary for a future war. Because Schleicher was seemingly unable to offer this, and the Nazis were, leading elements in the Reichswehr increasingly sought cooperation and support of the NSDAP.

While the NSDAP was most popular with the middle class, the Nazis made overtures to other social groups in order to gather as much support as possible, a development that made the Reichswehr more inclined to work with them. Despite being the National Socialist *Worker's* Party, the Nazis were not overly focused on the industrial

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[216] *Ibid.*, 107.
[217] Ian Kershaw, "Ideology, Propaganda, and the Rise of the Nazi Party." In The Nazi Machtergreifung, ed. Peter D. Stachura, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 175.

working class. The NSBO (*National Sozialisische Betriebsorganization*) was a spontaneous development, that was only recognized in 1929, and reformed into the RBA (*Reichsbetriebszellabteilung* or Reichs Factory Worker's Division) under Gregor Straßer's recommendation. While Hitler was slow to recognize the importance of the RBA/NSBO, Straßer was very active in social and economic policies. On 12 May 1932, the *Völkische Beobachter* published his "Immediate Economic Programme," in which Straßer demanded an immediate Job Creation Program and the assurance of the "right to work."[218] Despite Straßer's economic program, the most consistent messages delivered to the working class remained anti-SPD slogans, and promises to deal with unemployment. Nevertheless, the NSDAP developed a multitude of social organizations to spread their ideology to as many segments of German society as possible. The NSDStB (National Socialist German Student's Association), the NSLB (National Socialist Teacher's League), the NSS (National Socialist School's League) and the NSF (National Socialist Women's League or *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft*) were all created in an attempt to achieve this goal.[219] While the success of these groups can be debated, their mere presence was a strong indicator to the Reichswehr that the Nazis were building the type of social support and potential unity that they viewed as a military necessity.

From an ideological standpoint, the NSDAP and the Reichswehr operated with very similar principles. Both organizations were highly nationalistic, militaristic, and expansionist. Schleicher and the Nazis each pursued a militarization of German society, hoping to infuse military values, like obedience and sacrifice, into the general populace. For both organizations this campaign was a part of the overall focus on social support,

[218] Mühlberger, 115.
[219] *Ibid.*, 115.

which was important common ground for them. The Reichswehr wanted a strongly unified society to support the next war effort, and during the Republican era it became increasingly apparent that the NSDAP was better positioned to provide this than any other organization or individual. Although the Nazis were primarily a middle class party, they still possessed various organizations aimed at spreading their influence throughout German society. Furthermore, Schleicher and the Reichswehr viewed the NSDAP as vital component in preventing the rise of the political Left. Without the Nazis acting as a 'social anchor' for the Right wing, it was feared that support for the SPD and KPD would soar dramatically, and possibly disrupt the army's plans for future wars. Additionally, the NSDAP was the loudest and most consistent proponents of the re-armament and expansion of the Reichswehr. Both the army and the Nazi Party wanted to establish German military and political hegemony over the rest of Europe through a war of conquest. This was the main basis of all NSDAP-Reichswehr cooperation. Through a mixture of ideological commitment to expansion, pragmatic opportunism, and militarism, the Reichswehr was able to justify closer associations with the Nazi Party, because of the possibility of military expansion. Thus, when examining some of the predominant characteristics of the NSDAP and the Reichswehr under Schleicher, an image emerges of two organizations with highly similar ideological aspirations, which would provide a foundation for cooperation and close association in the final years of the Republic. While Geyer simply writes that the NSDAP and Reichswehr needed each other pragmatically, it can be shown that the two groups were effectively merging into one large Right-wing power apparatus. They operated within a similar ideological framework, based on nationalism, social militarism and expansionism through revisionist polices, which tied

the organizations together philosophically. This ideological association between the army and the Nazis would influence the day to day relationship between each group in the late Republic. This becomes apparent after examining the political interactions of Schleicher and the NSDAP leadership in throughout 1932 to January 1933.

POLITICAL INTERACTIONS

Many historians studying the Weimar Republic focus on Hitler as the dominant political figure in the collapse of the state. The political developments from 1932 to 1933 have been viewed in terms of a linear dynamic with Hitler and the NSDAP diametrically opposed by SPD and the few Republican politicians. While newer research suggests that the Weimar state had ceased to operate as a liberal democracy during 1930 with the creation of the Presidential Cabinet system, historians still ignore the important transformations that had occurred within the Republic during these two years: especially Schleicher's rise to a position of preeminence with vast amounts of *de facto* power while the cabinet simultaneously grew dramatically in power. This is extremely important because it significantly alters the traditional view of the collapse of the Republic. The neat, simple interpretation of the collapse of the Republic occurring solely by Hitler's hands is invalidated when Schleicher's importance is re-constructed. While Schleicher was nominally a high-ranking Republican politician, his personal identity and loyalty remained with the army. His personal ideological motivations drew him closer to the NSDAP, which had a similar effect on Nazi-state relations. Schleicher's actions in the late Republican era can also be viewed as an attempt to fundamentally transform the organization of the state, through a merger between the two most dominant Right wing organizations, the Nazi Party and the Reichswehr, under a Presidential Cabinet regime.

Although Schleicher was ultimately unsuccessful, his actions significantly shaped how the Republic was finally overthrown.

Initially, Schleicher was concerned about the revolutionary elements within the Nazis' rhetoric. He feared that, like the KPD, they would be destabilizing force within the country, and originally viewed the Nazi's economic platform as "pure Comminism" (*reine Kommunismus*).[220] However, once the nationalist, militarist and expansionist policies of the NSDAP had been clearly expressed, his opinion of the party changed dramatically. Nevertheless, Schleicher only began to take notice of the Nazis in 1930 after their Reichstag support grew dramatically. Only after the Nazis became an important social factor Schleicher became interested in working with them.[221] During 1929, the NSDAP articulated their re-armament goals in the Reichstag, which improved Schleicher's opinion of the organization. After the first meeting between Hindenburg, Brüning, Hitler, Frick and Göring, on 10 May 1930, which Schleicher attended, he concluded that the possibility existed for official cooperation with the NSDAP.[222] Schleicher never completely trusted the direction that the Nazis wanted to lead the state. He expressed the view that "National Socialists are fundamentally more dangerous than Communists, because they drape their subversive efforts in [a] nationalist mantle."[223] This demonstrates an important characteristic of Schleicher-NSDAP relations. While Schleicher regarded the Nazis as potentially useful, and suitable for cooperation, he would never fully trust them, and never entertained scenarios that involved Nazi control over the Presidency or the Chancellery. Papen and to some extent Oskar von Hindenburg

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[220] Schild, 118.
[221] *Ibid.*, 119.
[222] *Ibid.*, 119.
[223] Schild, 119. Schleicher stated this in October 1929.

shared these sentiments that the Nazi organization had merit, but that the NSDAP was not to be placed in a position of control or dominance within the state.

May 1930 marked the beginning of attempts to establish official cooperation with the NSDAP. During 1930 to 1931, Chancellor Heinrich Brüning made several overtures to the Nazis, offering them various positions in the cabinet. Initially, in the summer of 1930, he offered Hitler the positions of Reichs Economic Minister and Domestic Minister, both of which he refused. Instead, Hitler adopted an "*Alles oder Nichts*" (everything or nothing) policy for Nazi state involvement, insisting that the NSDAP would only cooperate with the government if he were appointed Chancellor.[224] Thus, by the end of 1931, a predictable pattern becomes apparent. The cabinet, under Schleicher's influence initially as Reichswehr Minister and later as Chancellor, would offer the NSDAP various positions, which were refused at Hitler's insistence. For Hitler there could be no cooperation with the Weimar state. A large portion of Nazi ideology attacked the Republic as illegal as a political settlement that was forced on Germany, and therefore, to work with and support the government would constitute a major reversal of Nazi propaganda, possibly jeopardizing their public support. Despite Hitler's refusal to work with the government, Schleicher still wanted to integrate the NSDAP into the state.

It is important to emphasize the Schleicher did not aim for the "*Zähmung*" or the taming of the NSDAP. Axel Schildt argues that Schleicher wanted to use the Nazis for his own purposes, but Schleicher's actions can instead be interpreted as an attempt to integrate the NSDAP into a new Right wing structure. Viewing his relationship with the Nazis as a 'taming' of the party overlooks the common ideological basis of the two

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[224] *Ibid.*, 119.

groups and the important interactions between the organizations. Schleicher did not simply desire to tame the Nazis for his own purposes. Rather, the NSDAP would be an integral part, possibly a junior partner, in a Right wing, social, military, political alliance. He wanted the Nazis to become the "healthy core" (*gesunden Kern*) of his new regime.[225] Schleicher's attempts to incorporate the prominent Nazi, Gregor Straßer, into the cabinet constituted the start of a new power structure, not merely a tactic to 'use' the Nazis.

After the abortive attempts to integrate the NSDAP into the Presidential Cabinet system under Hitler's leadership during 1930 and 1931, Schleicher began to search for other alternatives for cooperation with the Nazis. The leadership of the NSDAP was unsuitable for Schleicher's purposes for two main reasons. First, as has been stated, Hitler refused to integrate into any system in which he was not Chancellor, and secondly, the contemporary NSDAP leadership pursued a course of "corroding" Schleicher's support basis. While Schleicher used the term 'corrosion,' subversion was perhaps a more accurate description of the Nazi actions. The NSDAP actively sought to challenge the loyalty of the rank and file of the Reichswehr, and thus diminish Schleicher's support base, and ability to act against the Nazi Party, if he needed to. Indeed the "*Zersetzungsgefahr*" (or corroding danger) of working with the Nazis, was an important reason for Schleicher's pursuit of Straßer to led the NSDAP on an integration course.[226] As he was becoming increasingly aware of the interactions between the Nazis and the army, Schleicher recognized that he needed to have more control over and influence within the Nazi Party, to counter-act the subversion of his support base. Schleicher was aware that General von Hammerstein, the Chief of the *Heeresleitung*, had already begun

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[225] Schild, 118.
[226] Schild, 120. Schleicher used this term in a letter to General Ritter von Epp.

having meetings with Hitler as early as mid-1931. Additionally, local and regional NSDAP members were encouraged to create strong relationships and connections to regiment and battalion level commanders during 1931 to 1932.[227] Schleicher also blamed the leader of the SA, Ernst Röhm, for encouraging the SA members, within the *Grenzschutz*, to engage in what he called "corroding activities" (*Zersetzungstätigkeit*).[228]

Changes within the Reichswehr leadership led to increased sympathies for the NSDAP. Over a two year period from 1929 to the end of 1930, twenty-nine Generals retired from senior level positions.[229] They were replaced by newer officers who were not the old aristocratic social elite of the Wilhelmine era, but younger professionals who coveted their social prestige and power.[230] The majority of these new generals were well educated, 49% had their *Arbitur* and 85% came from urban areas, in contrast to the traditionally rural background of the older officers.[231] These newer commanders were attracted by the Nazis' promises of military re-armament and the opportunities for promotion that it offered. As a result, throughout the early 1930s, the Reichswehr leadership underwent significant changes that made cooperation with the NSDAP more likely. Furthermore, the selection of new recruits for the lower ranks of the Reichswehr also strengthened the pro-Nazi sentiments within the army. Men who served in the SA were the most likely candidates to join the Reichswehr in the late Republican era.[232] They were young, generally physically fit, had already been exposed to military discipline, and, most importantly, *wanted to join* the army. These men wanted to be trained to use rifles

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[227] *Ibid.*, 120.
[228] *Ibid.*, 121.
[229] Geyer, "Etudies," 110.
[230] *Ibid.*, 110.
[231] *Ibid.*, 110.
[232] Geyer, "Etudies," 111.

and other military equipment and gain the wider social acceptance and standing that serving in the army offered.

Schleicher's position was actually less secure than has been suggested. The lower and senior ranks had strong NSDAP sympathies, or were drawn directly from the SA in some instances. Ideologically the two organizations shared a great deal. Also, the Nazis were actively attempting to subvert the loyalties of the Reichswehr through "corroding activities." These actions included spreading Nazi propaganda materials at *Grenzschutz* meetings, and wearing their Nazi swastikas during official meetings and exercises with the Reichswehr.[233] Thus the army and the NSDAP were not distinct separate identities in the late Weimar era, but merging into one large and powerful organization. Schleicher's moves towards the NSDAP leadership were not an attempt to tame the Nazis, but rather an internal power struggle for dominance over this newly developing integration of the NSDAP and the Reichswehr.

Despite Hitler's refusal to work with the government, Schleicher was still optimistic about integrating the NSDAP. Straßer was a strong promoter of the Nazi's social and economic programs, which was ideal for Schleicher's military plans. Early in 1928 Straßer gave a Reichstag speech that convinced Schleicher that Straßer would be a more suitable and acceptable leader for the NSDAP within an integration framework. Straßer stated "We National Socialists are militarist from head to toe" (*Wir Nationalsozialisten sind Militaristen vom Scheitel bis zur Sohle*).[234] Additionally he expressed his revisionist desires by saying "We are militarist, because we are socialist. German socialists because we know that Germany must be free!" These quotations are

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[233] Carsten, 335.
[234] Schild, 128.

indicative of Straßer's general nationalist, social militarist ideological disposition that he articulated throughout his years in the Reichstag. Finally, Straßer also outlined economic plans that mirrored Schleicher's. He called for an extensive *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogram* to alleviate the pressures of the financial crisis and also proposed a balance between a "military" and "capitalist ratio," for further economic development and planning.[235] Based on these speeches Schleicher deemed Straßer "a completely moderate speaker."[236] As Schildt argues, the Nazi acceptance of a Job Creation Program, under Straßer's insistence, prompted Schleicher to consider the NSDAP for integration into a Presidential Cabinet regime. Furthermore, Straßer's strong rejection of the SPD as promoting a "destructive class war" (*volkszerstörende Klassenkampf*), is evidence of another political similarity between Schleicher and Straßer.[237] Based upon these overarching similarities in policy matters, Schleicher attempted to directly bring Straßer into the cabinet.

Schleicher and Straßer met in late September 1932 in Dresden to begin integration discussions.[238] By the time of this meeting two distinct wings had developed within the NSDAP. The Hitler wing, including Röhm, Göring, Goebbels and Himmler, firmly maintained that the Nazi Party would only cooperate with the government if Hitler was Chancellor. In opposition to this group, politically moderate individuals assembled around Straßer. His position within certain circles of the party was estimated to be quite strong. Straßer's support was largely based in the Reichstag, with approximately one

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[235] *Ibid.*, 128.
[236] *Ibid.*, 129. Schleicher made this comment on May 10th 1932 after a Reichstag speech where Straßer implied that he would open to integration option
[237] Schild, 131.
[238] *Ibid.*, 160.

third to one half of the deputies following his integration course.[239] Throughout 1932 this wing of the party became increasingly convinced that integration, or cooperation, with the government had become absolutely necessary. During his time in the Reichstag, Straßer had clearly indicated that integration was required to consolidate the popularity and strength of the NSDAP. He wanted to see the Nazi Party take important posts within the cabinet and begin to influence the direction of government policy, thus achieving concrete results that could be used to garner more support in a future election. This subtle, yet sharply defined, cleavage within the Nazi Party influenced Schleicher's interactions with the NSDAP during the decisive period in the Republic's fate, between August 1932 and January 1933.

On 13 August 1932, Hitler and Hindenburg held yet another meeting to discuss the possible integration of the NSDAP into the cabinet. Once again, Hitler rejected the Schleicher designed offer to have Hitler become Vice-Chancellor. However, at this meeting the Nazi members present, and particularly Straßer, articulated their opposition to Papen as chancellor. This convinced Schleicher that eventually Papen would have to be removed for integration to proceed.[240] Despite the fact that Schleicher would offer Hitler other opportunities for integration after this meeting, the August discussion convinced Schleicher that these proposals would not succeed, and that Straßer would have to lead the NSDAP to accomplish his plans.[241] Indeed, Hitler's speeches at the Berliner Sportpalast on 1 September, and on 7 of September at the Münchener Zirkus

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[239] *Ibid.*, 160.
[240] Schild, 127.
[241] *Ibid.*, 128.

Krone, continued to emphasize that the NSDAP would only support a solution that involved himself as Chancellor.[242]

The 6 November election results were one of the most important events in the Schleicher-Straßer relationship. Despite losing two million votes, the Hitler wing of the NSDAP remained firm in their position that there would be no integration into a government without Hitler as Chancellor. After receiving the election results, Goebbels maintained "the opposition gets weaker with every election, and the National Socialists get stronger."[243] However, for Straßer and his supporters the results where the clearest indication that integration would have to occur quickly to consolidate the gains that the party had made in the previous years. At a meeting of his associates, Straßer commented "that in time the NSDAP would be in a difficult position" (*daß die NSDAP zur Zeit in einer gewissen schwierigen Lage sei*).[244] Additionally, the Thuringian provincial elections on 4 December, which saw the Nazis again marginally lose supporters, confirmed to Straßer that he needed to attempt to integrate the NSDAP into the government. These two elections motivated Straßer to take immediate action, while the Hitler wing remained staunchly opposed to any movement in favour of the government.

After meeting with Hindenburg and Schleicher in 1 December,[245] Straßer decided to take direct action to implement an integration of the NSDAP. On 8 December, he gather some of his key supporters, like Robert Ley, Rus, Haocke, Sprenger, Mutschmann, Leopart and Lohse, and informed them that he had written a letter to Hitler announcing his resignation. Additionally he stated that he was going to depart for Berlin to determine

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[242] *Ibid.*, 130.
[243] *Ibid.*, 131.
[244] Schild, 133.
[245] *Ibid.*, 137. The exact details of this meeting have never been determined.

"whether one could not find a middle way between the retention of a Presidential Cabinet and the desires of the National Socialists for the take over of the direction of the state."[246] However, Hitler was quickly informed of Straßer's attempted departure and was able to prevent him from traveling to Berlin and stop the spread of his rebellion.[247] Straßer's insurrection failed for two primary reasons. First, his support base was limited to the Reichstag and would not allow for a boarder challenge to Hitler. In actuality Hitler had far greater popularity among the rank and file of the NSDAP, and was able to mobilize over 15 000 loyal members within hours of Straßer's move against him,[248] largely minimizing its effectiveness. Second, Straßer did not properly coordinate his move against Hitler with Schleicher. There was no communication between the two men leading up to 8 December. This was a crucial error that prevented the successful integration of Straßer's supporters into the Presidential regime. Instead, by 9 December, Hitler had maintained control over the leadership of the party and largely isolated Straßer from access to any of his supporters and any effectual power within the NSDAP.[249] Even by 13 December, Schleicher still was unaware of Straßer's fall within the party, as indicated by Schleicher's statement that he hoped that either Straßer or possibly Frick would take control of the Nazi Party and integrate it into the government.[250] It is possible that Schleicher may not have learned of Straßer's failure until 21 December, as that was

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[246] *Ibid.*, 160.
[247] *Ibid.*, 161.
[248] Schild, 161.
[249] *Ibid.*, 161.
[250] *Ibid*, 161. Schleicher expressed these sentiments in a letter to the Crown Prince on 13.12.31.

the first time that he indicated he was aware of the split within the NSDAP.[251] Straßer's isolation within the Nazi Party constituted the collapse of Schleicher's best possibility for integration.

In response to Straßer's internal rebellion against his leadership, Hitler acted to neutralize his major opponent within the Weimar state: Schleicher's government. It had become apparent during Straßer's insurrection that Schleicher, as Chancellor, had become Hitler's greatest antagonist. Hitler initiated a meeting with Papen, which was held in Cologne on 4 January 1933.[252] The meeting was called with the express purpose of convincing Papen to petition Reichspresident Hindenburg to withdraw his confidence in Schleicher following a new election being held in the immediate future.[253] Hitler was able to convince Papen that only the NSDAP had the power to defeat the Communists and revolutionary Left. Papen, and even many of Schleicher's closest supporters, already believed that "the last dance with the Communists was only a question of time."[254] At the meeting in Cologne Hitler demanded the Chancellery, as well as the posts of Minister of the Interior, Reichswehr Minister and control of the Prussian Presidency for the NSDAP.[255] Once Hitler was assured of Papen's support in removing the Chancellor, he continued to target Schleicher's support basis within the Republic. Hitler made attemps to unify the various Right wing para-military organizations, like the Stahlhelm, under SA control, to decrease the Reichswehr's authority over the *Grenzschutz* for possible

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[251] DKS, 220. General Major von Hörauf discussed the split in a letter to Schleicher dated 21.12.32. This was the first indication that Schleicher was aware of Straßer's failure on 8.12.32.
[252] *Ibid.*, 220.
[253] *Ibid.*, 222.
[254] *Ibid.*, 224.
[255] *Ibid.*, 224.

counter-revolutionary actions.[256] These actions not only weakened Schleicher's ability physically to oppose the NSDAP, but also enhanced the appeal of the Nazis to the rest of the Reichswehr leadership, as control of the *Grenzschutz* was extremely important to the army's mobilization and border defense plans. Additionally, Hitler made overtures to several Right wing parties, in an attempt to isolate Schleicher from any possible Reichstag support.[257] By specifically targeting the DNVP and the *Zentrum*, Hitler was not simply building a coalition to obtain a parliamentary majority; these parties were also the organizations that Schleicher had hoped to court and integrate into his government. Thus, as the majority of historians have overlooked Schleicher's influential role in the function of the Republic, they have interpreted Hitler's actions as merely being focused on building the support of the NSDAP. Instead Hitler's plans were specifically targeted at weakening and ultimately removing his strongest competitor from power. After Straßer's failed integration attempt, Hitler recognized that Schleicher had to be isolated and eliminated in order to assume control over the functions of the state. Hitler's actions in the late Republican era were not random attacks on the Weimar state, but rather a coordinated strike against a hostile political opponent.

Schleicher reacted poorly to Straßer's defeat and failed to take appropriate actions to respond to the crisis. His operational timeline was too slow to generate tangible, immediate results. At a cabinet meeting on 16 January, he remained convinced that the NSDAP "was crumbling internally" (*die Parteien ist innerlich mürbe*). Thus he proposed delaying elections until either 22 October or 12 November 1933, to allow time to build

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[256] Schild, 136.
[257] *Ibid.*, 136.

parliamentary support for the Presidential Cabinet regime.[258] Schleicher continued to debate what course should be taken towards Hitler and the NSDAP, despite the fact that he was informed of the Hitler-Papen meeting on 4 January. Furthermore, Hugenberg was meeting with Hitler on 16 January to discuss the DNVP's support for a Nazi led cabinet, while Schleicher was still discussing future options.[259] However, some members of the cabinet believed that relatively few possibilities remained. For example, Reichs Commissioner for Job Creation Dr. Gereke stated that "a parliamentary majority for the cabinet could only be obtained with Hitler."[260] Nevertheless, at the conclusion of this cabinet meeting there were still no concrete plans for future negotiations with the NSDAP, nor a definitive outline for the future, other than to delay elections until the fall.

Schleicher was ultimately removed as Chancellor in favour of Hitler by the end of January. While Schleicher was attempting to secure support for the Presidential Cabinet regime, Hitler was able to unite Schleicher's numerous enemies in opposition to him. Once only a mere pawn of Schleicher's, Papen was influential in removing Hindenburg's support for Schleicher's Chancellorship. Papen convinced the President that Hitler and the NSDAP were the best choice to lead the country because of their popularity, ability to oppose the Communists and revolutionary Left, and his firm belief that with Hindenburg as President Hitler would be unable to drastically alter the nation's course without his and Hindenburg's consent. Additionally, the Reichswehr leadership's growing acceptance of the NSDAP and the latter's increasing hostility towards Schleicher led to the army's support of the move to oust the General. Thus Hitler, and the popularity of the NSDAP,

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[258] DKS, 231.
[259] *Ibid.*, 232.
[260] *Ibid.*, 235. The Reichs Finance Minister echoed these sentiments.

subverted the main foundation for Schleicher's power within the Republic. By late January 1933, the Reichswehr's loyalties to the Weimar state or to Schleicher were highly questionable. The lower ranks were either being drawn from pro-Nazi segments of society, or were being subverted by the NSDAP's movement through direct attempts at coercion. The middle ranking officers saw the Nazi Party's re-armament policy as their best opportunity to obtain a promotion. Finally, the top Reichswehr leadership believed that all of their narrow military based goals for the future shape of the army and the nation could most easily be fulfilled by the NSDAP. Thus, when Hitler directed Papen to cut off Schleicher's official political power, severing his connection with President Hindenburg, Schleicher did not possess any reliable or legitimate method for opposing or counter-acting Hitler's move against him.

CONCLUSION

The ideological similarities between Schleicher and the NSDAP created a strong basis for cooperation in the late Republican era. While Geyer only contends that the Reichswehr and the Nazi party shared a "partial identity of goals," I contend that the NSDAP and the army increasingly shared one identity. The two groups were drawn from similar militaristic and nationalistic segments of society, and were organized along similar ideological lines. All of the Reichswehr's plans for mobilization and re-armament, including social militarization, could and later would be carried out through the NSDAP platform. Given the physical melding of the NSDAP and the Reichswehr, the final months of the Republic were a struggle between several power groups attempting to assert their dominance. The Schleicher-Straßer alliance represented a Reichswehr dominated leadership group for the emerging Right-wing power apparatus, while Hitler's

association with, and manipulation of, Papen was a NSDAP dominant option for control over the merging army and Nazi Party. It is important to emphasize that there were two viable options in the late Republic era within the ideological conservative Right-wing. Either the Hitler controlled Nazis or the Schleicher led Reichswehr could have established control over the other organization. However, the two organizations operated within the same ideological framework and were too similar for both groups to continue to exist independently of each other. By late 1932, the power that Schleicher had generated, through the Reichswehr and the support of the President, made him the most powerful person in the Republic. His eventual failure to win control of the merging NSDAP-Reichswehr structure also constituted Hitler's single greatest victory over the Weimar Republic. By re-habilitating the position that Schleicher had in the Republic, before and during his Chancellorship, Hitler's actions assume new significance. Hitler's attacks on the state were specifically aimed at Schleicher. While Schleicher was not a loyal supporter of the liberal democracy, his power was derived from the Weimar state. As a principal base for Schleicher's power, the Reichswehr, was increasingly shifting towards the Nazi movement, the fate of the Republic was subsequently decided through the internal Right wing power struggle between Hitler and Schleicher.

VI. Conclusion

The Weimar Republic was founded through a pact between the army and the Ebert government, and the relationship between the Reichswehr and the civilian administration was to be highly influential throughout the course of the Weimar state. None of the Reichswehr's leaders exemplified this more than Kurt von Schleicher. He acquired a vast amount of both constitutional and unconstitutional power beginning in 1930 making him the most influential Republican statesman in the late Weimar era. Schleicher's personal ideological motivations dictated the political direction and strength of the Republic from 1930 until its demise in 1933. However, Schleicher was largely a destructive force within the Republic. He deliberately sought to weaken the democratic, economic, and social foundations of the Weimar state. Schleicher had plans to re-organize the government into a popularly supported military dictatorship that was based on the powers of the Reichspresident. Schleicher's and the Reichswehr's association with the NSDAP profoundly changed the direction of the state. Schleicher attempted to merge the army and the Nazi Party ideologically and organizationally during the final years of the Republic. In this context Schleicher's relationship with the NSDAP must be interpreted as a struggle with Hitler for control over a broader Right-wing political formation composed of the Nazi Party and the Reichswehr. Even though many of Schleicher's policies were ideologically similar to those later pursued by the Nazis, there was a political distinction between Schleicher and Hitler.

Schleicher's personal ideological framework was devastating for the democratic stability of the Republic. He was the strongest and most effective opponent of the liberal democracy within the Weimar state, and was active in curtailing its democratic

institutions. While Schleicher's strongly anti-democratic nature was evident on a daily basis, whether it was through restricting elected officials from access to power or interfering with the operation of political parties, it became most apparent with two main initiatives. The first was the attack on the Prussian democracy, the strongest 1932 Republican institution, which significantly weakened the overall stability of the Weimar state. The second was the gradual building of a Presidential Cabinet regime, which consolidated the vast majority of the executive and judicial power of the Republic in the Chancellor's cabinet, in the office of the Reichspresident and significantly disrupted the operation of Weimar social democracy. The Presidential Cabinet system effectively circumvented the constitutional operation of the Republic. The attack on Prussian social democracy significantly accelerated the decline of the Republic, because Schleicher's cabinet was able to consolidate the powers of the Prussian state. Relying heavily on the executive powers of the Presidency to dismiss the Reichstag upon request from the Chancellor, this new presidential regime was aimed at gradually constructing a form of popularly supported military dictatorship. Although the Presidential Cabinet system never actually reached this stage, Schleicher's initiation of the process to establish it was sufficient to inhibit the democratic functioning of the Weimar state. The Prussian ministry was responsible for controlling three fifths of the total police forces within Germany, and it had significant financial resources that were similarly absorbed by the Presidential Cabinet. Additionally, following the take-over of the functions of the Prussian state, Schleicher was able to initiate a constitutional reform that increased the executive powers of the cabinet, effectively crushing any provincial bureaucratic or judicial avenue to oppose his regime. Thus, the foundation and expansion of Schleicher's

Presidential Cabinet system, fueled by his anti-democratic ideological beliefs, helped to bring about the end of Weimar democracy. There were numerous individuals and organizations within the state that were even more anti-democratic than Schleicher; however, Schleicher chose to *act* against the Republic. He was not content with merely hoping for the demise of the democracy; he took direct action to curtail the power of democratically elected officials and establish a new power structure to achieve his authoritarian, anti-democratic vision of the future government of Germany.

Schleicher's expansionist and revisionist goals severely impacted the economy and foreign policy of the Weimar Republic. His major economic revival policy was specifically aimed at strengthening Germany's military capabilities and instilling a so-called "military ratio" into the economy. This ratio was to ensure that the Reichswehr's interests in the direction of the nation's financial planning were to play a dominant role. The *Arbeitsbeschaffungsprogram* (or Job Creation Program) was introduced as a highly focused plan designed to generate an overall economic revival. Instead, it targeted specific industries that would be most beneficial to the military. Even though members of his cabinet proposed alternative plans for a general economic revival, Schleicher remained focused on establishing a *Kriegswirtschaft* (or war economy). By choosing to aid specific Reichswehr-sympathetic companies, like Rheinmetall, Bochum, Krupp and IG Farben, Schleicher allowed his expansionist ideology to dominate his economic policy. By enhancing the militarily important sectors of the economy he hoped to build up Germany's military for a future war for European domination.

Schleicher's *Revisionspolitik* was integrally connected to his expansionist goals, which most clearly manifested themselves in his foreign policy. Instead of attempting

rapprochement with the former Allies, or even a series of revisions to the Treaty of Versailles that would have improved Germany's economic and foreign political position, Schleicher aggressively pursued his expressly expansionist and militarist revisions in a highly antagonistic manner during 1932. While nominally advocating for *Gleichberechtigung* (or equal rights), Schleicher outlined a series of revisions to the Treaty of Versailles that would have significantly altered the contemporary military and political balance of Europe. Instead of working to revive Germany's economic situation he sought to improve its military conditions. Although Schleicher demanded elimination of reparation payments to France, his policy was connected to a larger attack on the Treaty of Versailles with anti-French sentiments, rather a general concern for the financial welfare of average German citizens. Thus, Schleicher's *Expansions-* and *-Revisionspolitik* significantly influenced the economic and political situation for Germany. His powerful position within the Republic allowed him to work towards the establishment of a 'war economy' within an overtly expansionist-oriented state, achieved in part through revisions of the Treaty of Versailles.

Schleicher's social policies also served to undermine the strength of the Republic. Instead of seeking to build a social platform that would garner more support for the fledgling liberal democracy, and possibly attempting to disrupt the strong current of authoritarianism within Germany, Schleicher advanced his plans for societal militarization. Based upon his primary social identity as a Reichswehr general, first and foremost, he began promoting militarism that was guided by narrowly defined, military criteria. The Reichswehr firmly believed that future warfare would require a vast degree of coordination to generate full support for the war effort within the civilian sphere.

Additionally, Schleicher discussed the possibility of a *Volkstumskampf* (or a war of peoples) that demanded a thoroughly militarized population, which would be receptive to the demands placed upon them by this type of total warfare. As early as late 1918 the Reichswehr established a set of principles for the creation of a *Zukunftsarmee* (or Future Army) that would involve intensive cooperation between the civilian and military administrational spheres. This was the motivation behind Schleicher's aggressive pursuit of social militarism in the late Republic. Through various organizations and programs such as the *Grenzschutz* and the *Reichskuratoriums für Jugendertüchtigung*, Schleicher hoped to entrench "defensive thoughts" into the national psyche. Similarly, his attempts to build the *Kameradschaft* were similarly targeted towards this goal. Schleicher's proposed social organization was intended to unite all Germans under one common nationalistic and militaristic banner. While Schleicher's militarization goal assumed numerous forms in the late Republic, his endorsement of official cooperation and support of para-military organizations proved to be the most dangerous, and ultimately the most destructive, for the Weimar state. Through the *Grenzschutz* and other official connections with the Reichswehr, the various 'patriotic associations' gained wider social acceptance and legitimacy. This greatly aided the SA and the NSDAP, and served to make them more attractive within expanding circles of German society. Thus, while Schleicher was attempting to reform society to benefit the Reichswehr's war-planning, he in fact strengthened the forces seeking the destruction of the Republic, a policy he consciously adopted. Therefore, his social militarism scheme weakened the Weimar state in two main ways. First, the avowedly anti-Weimar NSDAP was significantly assisted by his plan, through improved military training and increased social acceptance. Second, Schleicher's

promotion of military virtues and attitudes in society came at the direct expense of the liberal democracy. The German youth was educated in militarist dogma, not democratic principles. The loyalty of the German society was to be directed to the army, not to the Republic. Schleicher's militarism proved to be another influential, destabilizing force for the Weimar state.

As both Schleicher and the NSDAP were determined either radically to transform or destroy Weimar democracy, the interactions between them were extremely important in determining how the Republic would collapse, and what would succeed it. Ideologically Schleicher and the Nazi Party were very similar. While they shared a similar militaristic and nationalistic mindset and agreed upon numerous issues including a Job Creation Program and a revisionist foreign policy, the foundation for Schleicher-NSDAP relations was a strong commitment to the aggressive pursuit of German re-armament. However, the remainder of the Reichswehr leadership was also attracted by the opportunities, ultimately weakening Schleicher's position within the army command. This highlights an important aspect of the NSDAP-Reichswehr relationship. Throughout the late Republic, the army and the Nazi Party, particularly through the SA, gradually became increasingly integrated, progressing to the extent that by 1932, Schleicher became highly cognizant of this activity. He was particularly alarmed by the 'corroding actions' of the SA, believing that they were subverting the loyalty of the lower ranks of the Reichswehr. Schleicher feared that these closer associations between the NSDAP and the army rank and file would destroy the loyalty of his primary base of support, if he was forced to oppose the Nazis in a struggle for control over the Republic, at some point in the future. Furthermore, the junior officer corps, in addition to the senior commanders,

were enticed by the opportunities for advancement and promotion that the NSDAP re-armament plans offered. As the loudest and most consistent proponent of immediate military expansion, the Nazi Party became a pragmatic choice for many army officers. Furthermore, the Reichswehr was increasingly forced to train new recruits selected from portions of society sympathetic to the Nazis; in fact, some troops were drawn directly from the SA.

In view of this gradual Reichswehr-NSDAP merger, Schleicher's actions must be interpreted as an attempt to assert his control over the new right-wing power structure. As a result of Hitler's repeated refusal to cooperate in any capacity with any cabinet that he did not control as Chancellor, Schleicher was forced to find an alternative leader for the NSDAP, one who would be open to an integration of the Nazi Party into a Presidential Cabinet system. His negotiations with the prominent Nazi Gregor Straßer were aimed at establishing a Reichswehr dominant/NSDAP subordinate control group to support this new system of government. By incorporating Straßer into the cabinet, Schleicher hoped to acquire a portion of Straßer's and the Nazis' Reichstag support for his planned authoritarian regime. Schleicher and Straßer arranged a series of meetings in late 1932 to discuss the possibility of NSDAP integration. Straßer was strongly convinced that the Nazi Party had to integrate into the government, following the loss of two million votes in the November 1932 election. However, Straßer's mid-December insurrection against Hitler's leadership was poorly planned and was not coordinated with Schleicher. Hitler was able quickly to halt Straßer's rebellion and effectively to re-assert control over the party. This had two significant consequences for Schleicher. First, his most realistic option for incorporation had been completely eliminated. Second, Hitler now recognized

that Schleicher was his strongest opposition within the Weimar state, and thus took appropriate actions to remove the General from power. Hitler was able to easily remove him from the Chancellery, taking advantage of Schleicher's numerous enemies in both the Reichswehr and the government. Papen and Blomberg were highly influential in assisting with Schleicher's dismissal, constituting the triumph of the Hitler-led NSDAP dominant/Reichswehr subordinate leadership group. Due to Schleicher's vulnerable position, as well as his ineffectual attempt at integrating the NSDAP into his Presidential Cabinet regime, Hitler was able to assert control over the merging Nazi/Reichswehr power apparatus, and to determine the future of the Weimar Republic. This explains why Schleicher and Hitler could be so closely related in terms of ideology and could share similar goals for the future of Germany, but also be staunch opponents of each other. It also explains why the Nazis later assassinated Schleicher. Because Schleicher had been such a strong opponent of Hitler in the Republican era, it was foreseeable that the NSDAP would eliminate him in their wider 'house cleaning' in 1934.

Schleicher had a two-fold impact on the overall course of the Republic. While Hitler and the NSDAP are the most well studied opponents of Weimar democracy, Schleicher was actually the most effective and important critic of the state. His vast amounts of power between 1930 and 1932 allowed him take direct action to circumvent the constitutional operation of the Republic. Furthermore, Schleicher advanced his expansionist and revisionist agenda purely for military considerations, instead of attempting to enhance Germany's overall economic or foreign policy position. However, it was his promotion of the Presidential Cabinet regime and his ruthless subversion of the functions of the state that made Schleicher the most successful opponent of the Republic.

His close association with the NSDAP only served to strengthen the Weimar opposition and eventually cause his own downfall.

This re-examination of the role of Kurt von Schleicher has yielded two major findings in relation to debates over the collapse of the Republic. First, considering the amount of power Schleicher possessed during the final two years of the Weimar state, and the extent of influence that he held over the direction of the state, historians can no longer relegate his role to 'footnote status'. Schleicher was the most important statesman in the Republic from 1930 on, and was the most significant individual in causing the weakening and eventual collapse of the state. Consequently, his role needs to be re-examined within the larger context of Weimar-era studies. Second, Hitler's actions in the late Republic must be re-interpreted as a power struggle with Schleicher for control over the merging NSDAP/Reichswehr power structure, which would ultimately decide the future form of the German state. Instead of merely opposing the Weimar state, Hitler was responding to direct attacks made by Schleicher to alter the leadership of the Nazi Party and to integrate it into his future government system. The late Republican era was in fact characterized by a power struggle between Hitler and Schleicher, not between the Weimar state and the NSDAP, because the 'Weimar state' was simply a Schleicher dominated transition government.

Finally, the subtle difference between the 'taming' of Hitler and the Nazis, and the 'integration' theory proposed here must be examined. While the predominant view of Schleicher's actions has interpreted them as a hijacking of an independent Nazi movement, this ignores several developments within Germany. First, the merging together of the Reichswehr/NSDAP ideologically and institutionally, did not allow for a

'taming' of one element over the other. They were integrating on an organizational level, in terms of troops, officers and leading generals. Schleicher's actions represented an attempt at political integration to match the physical and ideological integration that was already occurring. Second, Schleicher did not want 'use' the existing NSDAP with Hitler as leader. Instead, he sought to manipulate the leadership of the Nazi Party, through promoting Straßer as an alternative to Hitler. Schleicher wanted to integrate the NSDAP into a new government system, not merely use the power of the Nazi's to prolong the existence of the Weimar state. Thus, the integration theory encompasses a wider examination of contemporary developments than other interpretations of this era. It combines the re-habilitated position of Schleicher, with the merging between the Reichswehr and the NSDAP, and Straßer's importance for Schleicher's future government plans into one overarching interpretation. The 'taming' framework only establishes that Schleicher saw political cooperation with the NSDAP as viable. It does not elaborate on how or why this interaction would occur. The integration theory also brings Hitler's actions into new focus and allows for a re-interpretation of the late Republican era, ultimately shedding new light on the collapse of the Weimar Republic.

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